MISSING PAGE i & ii, IN BOOK

MEMOIRS

OF THE

COUNTESS DE GENLIS,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF

THE HISTORY OF THE

EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES.

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

120

VOL. VIII.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1826.

A26.9

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MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME DE GENLIS.

SINCE my return to Paris I have read a work with which I was before not at all acquainted, "*Etudes morales, politiques et littéraires,*" by M. Valéry. In spite of all my esteem for the author, I confess my surprise was extreme at finding in his work a superiority of talent, the more remarkable as it is still unacknowledged; it consists of a collection of observations always correct and often profound, reflections full of acuteness and impartiality, and of which the results are always favourable to morality. My opinion is of little consequence, and my verdict of no value, but quotations are *facts*. The following are some extracts from this excellent work:

"It is an unjust common place to draw a parallel between the decline of Christianity and that

of Polytheism. The latter fell as soon as its ordinances, its ceremonies, and its external forms were suppressed. Jupiter and Juno, driven from Olympus, could never ascend there again; their fall was that of those powers of fortune whom fear or necessity have led men to worship. Nothing was left of a religion without precept. But it would be in vain that we should remove from Christianity its dogmas and its observances—it preserves its moral code which is universal, which lives in the heart, and is the means at a future time of reviving itself.

" Modern history, with its uniform society, its institutions, and its borrowed literature, would be but a dry study if Christianity were not there to soften or to animate our barbarous character or limited understandings. It is thus that we owe to its influences the first heroes of all time, Fénélon and Turenne. Without Christianity—its feasts,* its observances—history would present nothing but court intrigues, cabinet egotism, the mechanism of war or of industry; it exalts and

* The church has been reproached with the multiplicity of its feasts; but those of Rome were far more numerous. The Roman calendar mentions eleven successive days dedicated to feasts. (See Ovid's Fasti.) The Greeks had perhaps more.—(*Note by the Author.*)

relieves, in fact, our society, melancholy, old, mistaken, given up to opinion, and deprived of those primitive ideas of poetry and liberty, which existed among the ancients.

"The life of the Christian, which Bossuet styles an *eternal solemnity*, is especially sublime as it draws to its close. The Romans filled their last wills with abuse of their enemies. Germanicus, when dying, expresses his resentment against Piso, and makes his friends swear to avenge him.

"It is to weakness, women, and children, that our religion has been especially beneficial. Abortions and exposure of children, were permitted by the laws of Sparta and of Athens. Christianity, with its mild and chaste mysteries, and the touching nativity of its divine founder, has rendered respectable the minority of kings, and the regency of queens. Obedience to a woman or an infant necessarily contributed to this preserving principle of our society, which was unknown to the ancients: people were no longer surprised to find themselves obeying a king in his cradle when they had adored a God in a stable.

"Fleury pretends that religion cannot exist without the study and the reading which tend to preserve our doctrine and its morality.

"Erudition among the clergy would at present be of incalculable service; for it would impose silence upon the impious facility of middling and inferior understandings, the scourge of our age, which produces scandal in our towns, and perpetuates barbarism in the country.

"Faith, which is a solitary and independent sentiment, may very easily exist among nations as well as among individuals, combined with errors of conduct. Bayard and the rest of the chevaliers for example—were their's not merely opinions, without faith? Faith is to religion what conscience is to morals; it may condemn us, but we have not the power of destroying it. Both are the gift of heaven, but they act differently: conscience, which belongs to the earth, produces remorse; but faith, which is of heaven, produces repentance. At the last day, if the former accuses us, the latter will sustain and console us; and it is the secret instinct of that inevitable moment which leads us to preserve our faith even in the midst of our faults.

"It would be easy to cite a thousand examples of cruelty among the priests of Polytheism.

"Two young Acarnanians, ignorant of the sen-

tence of exclusion pronounced against the profane, having entered the temple of Ceres along with the initiated were carried before the sacrificing priests and put to death. (Livy, xxxi. 14.) The adventure of the Chevalier de la Barre is nothing to this.

"Voltaire, in one of his most furious attacks on Christianity, acknowledges, nevertheless, the necessity of a priesthood, and combats the system of confiding the office only to fathers of families. 'Our society, such as it is, will not admit of such a change; I think it is necessary to keep up priests as the masters of our morals.' Theophilanthropy is one of the revolutionary follies which he would have condemned.

"It is wrong to believe philosophy favourable to incredulity. Religious philosophers have been every where superior to sceptical philosophers. In England, Newton and Clarke refuted Hobbes, Collins, Toland, and Tindal; and Des Cartes and Pascal are still the first among French philosophers.

"Reality is only the truth of this earth, if we may use the expression; it is the truth of the mob

and of children; it seems physical, fragile, perishable and limited. Truth is moral, spiritual, immense, infinite.

"Reality, which speaks only to the senses, is within the reach of man—the truth is oftener inaccessible to his understanding.

"Reality, the truth of the earth, is odious, melancholy, and subject to a thousand misapprehensions; it is one of the most intoxicating of those of which the wise man speaks in that reflection so full of sadness, '*I said to pleasure, why hast thou deceived me?*' Accordingly all nations have deserted it, and prefer to it illusion itself; they hate what they possess, and love what they have not. The Hebrew or the Athenian, amidst his rocks, longs for the deliciousness and the fertility of the plain—while the European of modern days, weary of its cultivated beauty, seeks the valleys of Switzerland, of which no ancient traveller ever dreamed; he visits Italy and Greece to study what *was*, and to escape from what *is*: for, perhaps, the secret instinct which makes us love tombs and ruins is one of the effects of our disgust for realities. This impression influences even our opinions and our senti-

ments; the modern publicist inclines to a republic, while the political writers of Greece are generally favourable to monarchy.

"Reality is frequently the end of happiness: our hearts fear and repulse it, and are more happy in what they hope or regret than in that which they believe they possess. Even in the arts of design, which seem the empire of reality, we arrive at the *beautiful* only by means of repeated correction.

"All which comes from on high—religion, morality, and liberty—are *truths;* pride, interest, ambition, vanity, are different species of *realities.* The former inspired the genius of a Bossuet, a Pascal, and a Montesquiou; the latter only produce dull and dry works, such as those of Larochefoucault and Duclos.

"In politics and the social order, what seems real and definite is often nothing; written constitutions belong only to nations oppressed or given over to the dominion of sophists; they are feeble, varying, and ignorant. True constitutions live in the heart; they are composed of morality, tradi-

tions, manners, sentiments,—and particularly of honour and our country.*

"Genius uses systems as the architect his scaffolding, to erect its own monument. Both get rid soon of the useless carpentry, but which was for a time necessary.

"The influence of women upon the manners and morals of primitive societies, as on the infancy of individuals, is natural and easy to understand. It is *useful*, and re-appears with no less energy among great and civilized nations.

"Perhaps Louis XIV. ruled less in Europe by means of his arms and his policy, than by the ascendancy of women. At that period, the princesses and great ladies of France spread our manners among the nations whose sovereigns they governed, as our writers extended our language and our wit. The poisoning of several of these women (young and charming) is an additional and horrible proof of their empire. This moral force of women exists in

* How many useful and religious ideas arise out of these fine reflections!—(*Note by the Author.*)

another shape among private individuals, where delicacy of sentiment has been preserved.

"It has been remarked, *if men make laws, women always make manners.* The inadvertence of Duclos, who has written his book called *Considerations sur les Mœurs,* and has scarcely pronounced the name of *woman,* is one of the numberless proofs of the infidelity and dulness of the moralists of the last century.*

"Pomp, vivacity, and noise in a nation which has till then been simple and unaffected, will always render it less estimable and less happy, without giving it any more brilliancy or elegance. This truth was not attended to by Frederick, and his philosophical, mocking, and *French* court, and his false magnificence,† did more injury to the German character, than could be repaid it in usefulness. By a contrary effect among ardent,

* Duclos thought he had made amends to the sex afterwards by composing his *Mémoires sur les Mœurs;* a detail of licentious adventures, mingled with an affectation of sentiment. What a strange epoch must that have been, which offered to women a picture of scandalous manners, in order to repair an oversight!—*(Note by the Author.)*

† A man of wit remarked, that there was always *un petit écu* wanting in all his *fêtes.*—*(Note by the Author.)*

frivolous, and social nations, outrageous severity will produce licentiousness. It was from the close of the reign of Louis XIV. (the severity and gloom of which have, however, been greatly exaggerated,) that we may date the most licentious of our plays.

"The moral degradation of society appears particularly in the character and conduct of men placed in the same rank by their literary glories. The author of *Telemachus* is simple and sublime even in his disgrace; he does not demand of the powers of the earth, like the author of Emilius (a new Diogenes in a new Athens*) public honours and statues. The enmity of Racine and Molière is very unlike the scandalous hatred of Rousseau and Voltaire. Genius respected itself even amidst its dissensions, and the great poet of the seventeenth century did not pour out, like the great writer of the succeeding one, gross and cowardly abuse of his adversary. The opposition of Port Royal, taken in a religious point of view, is elevated, courageous, and pure; it yields with a noble resignation: the *Encyclopædic* opposition is only the fruit of an interested system, vain, insolent, grasping, and persecuting; and its triumph

* Diogenes demanded a statue from the Athenians.—(*Note by the Author.*)

is the destruction of civilization and of the country.

"The Cardinal de Retz yielded to the prayers of friendship, when he wrote with fidelity, and at the expense of his own reputation, his astonishing Memoirs: but he did not address to God and to men proud *confessions*.

"A character which is peculiar to modern royalty is, that it is an abstraction, like honour and glory. The *undying monarch* is not an individual but a principle; and the most ordinary man inspires the same respect as the greatest. Certainly when Achilles d'Harlay said—'My soul is God's, my heart is my king's, and my body is in the hands of traitors:'—it was not love of Henry III. which animated him, but the *religion* of loyalty.

"Royalty under Louis XIV. is truly absolute, from the respect with which it strikes all hearts. Choisy relates that the Duke of Burgundy asked him, while he was writing the history of Charles VI. how he should contrive to say that the monarch was mad? Such a question from the grandson

of Louis XIV. relative to a dead prince, sufficiently proves what royalty was at that period.

"Royalty by right of birth is not *anarchical* like elective monarchy, and what is singular, it even counts more great men in its ranks. The throne of Poland has been less illustrious than the greater part of hereditary thrones.

"Liberty has always appeared to men of sense, in all periods, equally useful to princes and to subjects. In a state of actual civilization, this liberty is composed only of three or four rights—of individual liberty, that of the press, and equality of taxation.

"The abuse of liberty surpasses that of absolute power; because the former tyranny is exercised by a greater number, and in its own name.

"Liberty among nations which have suffered long from revolutions, or have been corrupted by sophists, is only possible and lasting when granted to them by justice and greatness. 'Liberty,' says an illustrious man, * 'is like a ray of the sun—it must come from on high.'"

* M. de Fontanes.

It is with regret that I here close my quotations. It may be said with perfect truth, that never have immense reading and vast education been employed with more usefulness and agreeableness: the author has the talent of always using his astonishing memory in so ingenious a manner as to draw frequent and excellent results from literary and historical facts. These reflections are new ideas which belong to him, and which throw an interest of the most attaching kind upon the reading of a work so worthy of being read by the public, and of obtaining the approbation of all sound intellects and good hearts.

With what reason does the author complain of *melancholy realities* of this earth! Alas, there is nothing here which can fully satisfy us! we tire of all the enjoyments of life—riches, honours, applause! We possess health without knowing how to appreciate a blessing so real: our joys are always deceitful and fugitive, and we know nothing of constancy but when it comes to us in the shape of pain. Friendship, love, fortune,—can never secure to us on earth a durable felicity, or a happiness steadily felt for a certain number of years: the exaltation of piety can alone give us the idea of a solid and supreme happiness—and this should be

the case, seeing that we are only, as the Scripture says, pilgrims upon the earth.

I walked to-day a long time in the pretty little garden belonging to my house. I gave myself up to reverie; and passed more than hour in the little thicket, of which the little breast-high wall looks out upon the street of St. Peter. I looked at a large and handsome house, which stood opposite. My eye glanced into its court and garden, and my surprise was extreme on discovering within their limits, or looking out at the windows, none but persons horribly deformed or walking on crutches: I fancied myself to have entered a palace inhabited by beings enchanted into this melancholy condition by the power of some fairy. Afterwards I learnt that this house was a place in which was exercised, with the utmost success, *orthopædia*, or the art of curing natural deformities.

I did not know of the existence of this establishment, of which, however, I had formed a plan; and had received a promise, some years ago, from the beneficent Duke of Gloucester, that he would erect in London an hospital of this description, in which poor children should be received gratuitously. In that of the Street of St. Peter persons pay; but it is still a great public benefit

that the art should be known and exercised: and I hope it will long be employed in my country for the solace of the unfortunate.

In my reveries, this morning, I asked myself why several animals, even the most ferocious, are nevertheless susceptible of the liveliest emotions of gratitude, and *I answered myself* that God has thus willed it; that, among the human race, the ungrateful (who are below the brutes) should be covered with shame, opprobrium, and infamy.

I read lately in the newspapers, that there have been some recently discovered little isles, from which various productions of nature have been brought: but it appears that the most useful and the best among them have been long since known: we *now* find no plants of superior virtues, and only insignificant animals, &c. &c. which to me seems an additional reason for believing that the greatest and last of events—the end of the world, is not far distant.

I have passed the evenings of the last week with persons whom I love infinitely, and who have made me sit up later than I am wont, without being able to complain. First, there are the Marquis of Lawoëstine and his charming daughter, by a second marriage; Léocadie, canoness of the noble chapter of St. Anne, in Bavaria—a

young person particularly interesting by her admirable conduct, her disposition, her information, and the elevation of her sentiments. Her father and I recalled to each other's memory with delight the pleasant days spent at Belle Chasse, Saint Leu, and Lamothe. On the latter journey, I said to him one day that I wished he would acquire a taste for natural history; and that I was astonished that a person so clever and industrious as he was, should not have acquired, before leaving Paris, the art of stuffing birds, of which there were so many charming species about the chateau of Lamothe. M. de Lawoëstine, without making any reply, set off next morning at day break, and went post to Paris: he passed forty-eight hours there in learning to stuff birds, of which he was taught the art by M. Mauduit, the most famous artist in this way of the time: after this exploit, M. de Lawoëstine returned triumphant to Lamothe, where he stuffed specimens of all the most beautiful birds in the country. He asked me for a device, and I gave him the following: the design, a chariot ready to start; and the motto these words—*Prêt a partir pour être utile.* No one ever carried farther the constant and amiable kindness which springs from an excellent heart.

M. de Lawoëstine begged me to rectify in my

Memoirs a little error which regards him: it was not from the princess of Guistelle, his cousin, that the Marquis of Lawoëstine inherited his title of grandee of Spain of the first class, it was hereditary in his own family: his father and grandfather were both grandees of Spain.

The young Count Alexis de Saint Priest: we talked together a great deal about Russia, of its magnanimous Emperor, of its two Empresses, so justly to be admired for their goodness, their beneficence, their enlightened love of the arts and literature, and the eminent qualities by which they are characterized. The Count St. Priest married in Russia a Princess Gallitzin, who joined illustrious birth to great fortune. Count Saint Priest has always so conducted himself in Russia as to merit the esteem of the public and his countrymen, as well as the honours of a court as remarkable for its generous policy and its intelligence as for its preponderance in Europe.

The Count Saint Priest has reason to be proud of having been the principal teacher of a pupil so solidly brilliant as the young Count Alexis his son; and he undoubtedly possesses the distinguished merit which was likely with such a disciple to be crowned with such desirable success. I inquired

about the tragedy, which I had heard read with so much pleasure at Mantes. This fine piece will be played in the course of the present winter: the author, as I have already said, would not solicit a *tour de faveur*, which he might, however, without any difficulty have obtained: if he had possessed less delicacy, he needed not have waited two years; and, at his age, to have entered two years earlier on his dramatic career, would have made his first success much more brilliant. Such a specimen of moderation, however, is worth a thousand triumphs of self-love. A conduct so nobly just is so rare, especially in early youth! it is self-love sacrificed to justice and to reason, which must always produce the purest enjoyments and the sweetest recollections.

I received a recent visit, a quite unexpected but most delightful one, from M. Henri de Bonald: I did not before know him but by the reputation of his talents; and his conversation, full of mildness and vivacity, adds greatly to the interest inspired by his noble name, his personal merit, and the reputation which in all respects is deserving of the education he has received. Who can avoid admiring in that respectable family, that union, that perfect and constant harmony of feeling, that love of

study and the public good, that purity of principles and conduct, which distinguish the family of Bonald?

I have passed two entire evenings with my niece Georgette Ducrest: years do not render her old: they have formed her mind and her reason without taking away any beauty from her charming face: she leads at Meung, with her excellent and amiable mother, the most edifying and delightful: they assemble at their house a school of poor young girls, whom they teach to read, write, count, and work. My sister-in-law and niece have each the cleverness of fairies in working, to which they unite talents of the most brilliant kind: they teach their pupils a quantity of pretty works, of which the greater number are their own invention. Georgette, who inherits from her mother a voice of ravishing beauty, and an excellent style of singing, has moreover the talent of drawing and painting: I have seen several little pictures by her, which were exquisitely executed. Our *tête à tête* conversations end always in sadness, for we often speak of my brother, whom we both regret with equal bitterness. Georgette reproaches me with not having sufficiently insisted in my *Memoirs* on the noble sacrifice made by my brother to the royal cause, when seeing the unfortunate

prince, to whose service he was attached, following pernicious counsels and engaging in dangerous and evil designs, he at once resigned his place as chancellor of the house of Orleans; and before any crimes had been committed, he left France and went to England. I do not enter into these details, because they are sufficiently well known, and because for certain reasons it would be painful for me to retrace them.

Georgette has a daughter (the young Coraly) who I hope will contribute largely to her mother's happiness. This infant announces already all the mild and modest virtues which form the glory of woman, and she possesses a solid taste for serious study, which is very rarely found among children of her age.

The young Duke de Noailles comes sometimes to see me. He has lately, in company with his young and amiable consort, (the Duchess de Noailles,) made a short journey to England: he has seen little, but he has observed justly, and this is a great point. He communicated to me a remark of his own, which greatly struck me, because it seemed to me so true. He considers the English nation to have many points of resemblance in common with the Romans, during the republic. In fact the two nations present us in the same

degree with instances of patriotism, national pride, disdain of foreign peoples, love of liberty, attachment to their laws and customs, a love of commerce and industry, and a sort of indifference to the fine arts. It was Greece and not Italy which produced the greatest artists of antiquity; and in the same way England can boast but few architects, painters, sculptors, or musicians, natives of the British islands. We might carry the parallel farther; but we must not include in it the sciences or literature, for the English have excelled in every department of both, since they can cite Newton, Boyle, Herschell, &c. &c.; Shakspeare, Milton, Addison, Pope, Savage, Fielding, Richardson, and Goldsmith. In comedy, Farquhar, Sheridan, &c. &c.

My old English friend, Mrs. Chinnery, came to pay me visits on two occasions: I have always found in her the same agreeable manners and the same friendship. I mentioned in these Memoirs that she had lost a little manuscript of mine, which I had confided to her care; this I was led to believe from a mistake, which was the fault of no one but myself, and which was occasioned by the loss of several letters. Mrs. Chinnery has had the terrible misfortune of losing a daughter, charming in every respect; and another child, who

had not reached the age of boyhood: but she finds consolation in a husband worthy of herself, and in the virtues of a son who is still left to her. She has experienced many disasters in point of fortune; but what are such reverses in comparison with the afflictions of the heart? She supports them with equal courage and resignation; and I admire in her person how much strength of mind adds interest to misfortune.

Since my residence in this house, I have several times seen Madame Recamier, and always with equal pleasure; for the charms of frankness and sensibility never decay or fade. In her most intimate communications she rarely speaks of herself, for the interests of her life have never been but relative. She has long possessed friends who are deservedly devoted to her, who have been, or still are, in elevated stations; but she has never profited *for herself* by her influence on them; she has only employed that kind of credit which friendship gives her, to suggest beneficent plans, or to be useful to those persons who have had recourse to her. It may fairly be said, that there does not exist a woman who has rendered more services than she, without either cabal or intrigue; and there is not one who, after the loss of a great fortune, has preserved more dignity under misfortune.

Since the overthrow of her fortune she took the noble resolution of quitting the great world and retiring to a convent; cultivating only the select and small society which she there gathers around her. In this circle which has long been the same, because good taste is the constant and sole attraction, are among others, M. le Duc Mathieu de Montmorency, whose mind and talents are so worthy to adorn and illustrate his virtues and his exemplary conduct; the Duc de Doudeauville, who joins to the austerity of principles the most pure, and to sagacity and a penetrating genius for business, the milder charms of the most agreeable manners; M. de Chateaubriand, equally celebrated throughout Europe and dear to his friends, &c. &c.

Madame Recamier, whose mind is occupied entirely by the friendship of these personages, has never thought of soliciting them on her own behalf. She counts besides among her friends several literary men, among whom I particularly beg to distinguish the estimable author of the poem in prose of *Antigone* (M. de Ballange) and of another work entitled "*The Man without a Name*," in which M. de Ballange has painted with the most terrible energy, all the horrors of remorse for a fearful crime. *The Man without a Name* is a re-

gicide of the unfortunate Louis XVI., who afterwards feeling the enormity of his crime, withdraws himself voluntarily from society, and goes to hide himself in a spot almost deserted by man, and which is only inhabited by some shepherds, who but for Christianity, would be savages—for they have neither commerce nor communication with their fellow-men. The regicide, out of regard to his family, wishes to hide a name he has dishonoured, but fearful of usurping that benevolence of which he feels himself unworthy, and to expiate his crime as far as he can, he wishes that at least his horrible *offence* should be known. He seeks to be unknown only to find more surely an absolute solitude; to be forgotten by men is not enough—he wishes to be deserted by them—that they should fly his presence with execrations; it is not a proud misanthropy which separates him from them; but, on the contrary, contempt and horror of himself. It is under the terrible name of *Regicide* that he fixes himself in a deserted cottage in that wild country. A wandering traveller discovers him there; the regicide recounts his melancholy story, and the traveller in vain tries to reconcile him to himself. After a long conversation the traveller, seized with astonishment and penetrated with compassion, is obliged to quit him; some years

after the traveller passes by the same spot; but the regicide is no more. Feeling his end approach, in spite of his long penitence, his crime had retraced itself so vividly on his memory, that he despaired of obtaining its pardon. Two priests exhorted him with all the eloquence which religion and charity united can inspire. The following is a part of this beautiful discourse, and is worthy of quotation.

"The respect which you have preserved for the memory of your king imposes on you the duty of acquiescing in his pardon, as formerly his orders would have imposed on you the duty of dying for him. The law of duty is always inflexible; it refuses to bend itself either to our tastes or our aversions. Remission of your crime is secured to you; but only on condition of your accepting what we may venture to call your second innocence. Your victim, who was your king, commands from his eternal abode in all things wherein he had power when on earth, as the wishes and will of a parent who is no more are always binding upon his children.

"Pardon and forgetfulness of your crime have not only descended on you from heaven, but they possess august interpreters upon earth; the brother of the martyr king seems to have ascended the

throne expressly to assure you of both. He extends towards you his royal inviolability.

"God hath sent us to the poor leper to finish his cure, and to tell him that he may now go forth fearlessly amidst the people; that he has been redeemed like other men; and that his immortal soul may lay itself open from the present hour, to the hopes held by those who have lived virtuously."

The regicide, reanimated and strengthened by this eloquent discourse, implored from the bottom of his soul the divine pity and died like a holy man. The author of this original work has never employed any intrigues for obtaining praise or favour. This is the reason why, in spite of his superior talents, he is not now as celebrated as he deserves to be.

It was Madame Recamier who lent me "*The Man without a Name*," and notwithstanding its magnificent binding in Russia leather, of which the strong smell always violently attacks my head, I read throughout in the course of the day. The eulogies (so well founded) which Madame Recamier had poured out upon this work, were sufficient to inspire me with the desire of becoming ac-

quainted with it. This lady, who is always charming, is especially so when she talks of her friends; and she acquires an additional and piquant charm by means of the sort of surprise she causes; for she quite rises from her habitual calmness of manner to all the vivacity which can accord with her mildness, when she has occasion to defend, to justify, or to praise her friends. That nothing might be wanting to complete the satisfaction I felt in seeing Madame Recamier again, after an absence of eighteen months, I found her learning by heart the finest verses of Dante and the Jerusalem delivered,—things to which even decrepitude could not render me insensible.

It is only within the last few days that I learned the death of Madame de Krudener, a person both extraordinary and interesting; two things which, when united, are very uncommon, especially in a woman. I knew her when I was at the convent of the *Carmelites* in the Rue Vaugirard. She wrote to me requesting me to call upon her, to this I consented with pleasure. I had read a very pretty novel of her's called *Valérie,* which by no means announced the exaltation of sentiment which I had heard attributed to the author. I was curious to know a person who allied great wildness of imagination to great frankness and simplicity of

character—and this was what I found in her. She said the most extraordinary things with a calmness which made them persuasive; she was certainly most sincere; she appeared to me amiable and clever, and original and piquant; she came several times to see me, testified great affection to my person, and inspired me with a genuine interest in her; she was full of sensibility, mildness, and excellent intentions. Her death caused me much grief—she was still young.*

At a time when all the tribunals are re-echoing to the fearful detail of monstrous and unparalleled crimes, and of the most revolting and most scandalous events, it is particularly delightful to collect all the details belonging to the same period, of beneficent actions and heroic examples. I have

* Valérie, Baroness de Krudener, was born in 1765. She was daughter of Count de Wittenkoff, governor of Riga, and granddaughter of the celebrated Marshal Munich. She was a beautiful woman. *Valérie*, of which Madame de Genlis speaks, is founded on a fact. The hero of the romance was secretary to the embassy of the Baron de Krudener, minister from Russia to Venice. This young man fell in love with Madame de Krudener, and in despair committed suicide. This tragical event is related in the most touching manner by the author of the novel of *Valérie*. Madame de Krudener followed the Emperor Alexander to Paris; and the *Holy Alliance*, in the opinion of many, was her work.—(*Note by the Editor.*)

cited many in my *Memoirs*, and I ought not to omit that of the unfortunate town of Salins.*

When, in 1799, the town of Saint Claude (Jura) was reduced to ashes, the inhabitants of Salins hastened to fly to the succour of their unfortunate countrymen. On a late occasion those of Saint Claude have hastened to acquit themselves of the double debt of gratitude and humanity; and have sent to Salins on the first news of the disastrous event, bread and all necessary supplies of clothing. The mayor, aided by the members of the Municipal Council, went about every where soliciting relief, and the same zeal has been manifested throughout the whole of France. Subscriptions have been opened; and the rich, the poor, the aged, and the young; even *infants* have subscribed with equal promptitude; and young scholars, who had scarcely passed childhood, have been known joyfully to sacrifice, for the benefit of the persons who had suffered by the fire, even their own little gratifications and their pocket money. A pupil, in one of the colleges of Paris, scarcely fifteen years of age and distinguished by his application and his successes, had been for a

* A town of France, remarkable for its fine salt mines.—*(Note by the Author.)*

long time economizing his pocket money, in order to purchase a fowling-piece and a well trained dog for the approaching vacation. This virtuous boy, on hearing of the misfortune which had befallen the town of Salins, went privately and begged the master whom he had made the depositary of his little treasure, to go immediately and carry the whole sum to one of the offices appointed to receive subscriptions for the town of Salins, excepting twenty francs which he reserved for his nurse, then just recovering from a long illness.

A notary, in order to save a deposit of fifteen thousand francs which had been confided to his charge, left in the flames a considerable sum belonging to himself.*

In all the schools both boys and girls have made collections, of which the total sum has been very considerable.

The pupils at the Polytechnic school, the law students, and the students of medicine, have shown the same eagerness and the same charitable feelings.

The government first of all sent one hundred thousand francs; and the king himself subscribed

† M. Eugene Pradel has improvisated some lines on a similar trait of another notary.—*(Note by the Author.)*

twenty-five thousand francs. The curates of the different parishes of Lyons made a collection which produced six thousand francs, and a number of other curates of different provinces have given efficacious proofs of the same charitable disposition. M. Laffitte subscribed ten thousand francs. There has been, in fact, a generous emulation among all classes and all professions; every where the zeal has been equal and the beneficence infinite.

This terrible fire can only be ascribed to a washing which had taken place in a cracked chimney. In this terrible catastrophe very few people perished; almost all the inhabitants neglected saving their properties in order to give themselves up to their exertions in favour of the sick, the aged, and the young whom they snatched from the flames.

When to such touching pictures we join the numerous beneficent establishments of all kinds formed since the restoration, in great part by ecclesiastics and the great ladies of the court,—and all those shops for the poor, so much patronised by the princesses (who deign even to embellish them with the work of their hands)—shops to which the most distinguished women in the highest circles consecrate their talents, their address,

and little works of every description, of which the charitable uses sanctify the frivolity; we may see how useful and how touching is religion, when it is to it that we owe so many benefits.

In speaking of noble actions and high character, I must here make mention of an instance which was lately recounted to me. There lives an old peasant woman near Paris who has an orphan grand-daughter sixteen years of age, with whom she charges herself, and whom she is passionately fond of; but as in such a condition of life sensibility is very commonly joined to brutality and violence; the affection of the old woman for the young girl does not prevent her from frequently beating her with rudeness and severity—a treatment which the poor girl has constantly supported with unalterable mildness and without uttering a single complaint. One day when the old woman, yielding as usual to her fury, beat the young peasant girl with great cruelty and for a long time; the latter all at once began to weep bitterly; on this her grandmother ceased and cried out, "Ah! this is something new, you never used to cry when I beat you, and why do you do so now?" . . . . . "Alas!" cried the angelic girl, "I cry because you don't hurt me now, and I see by that sign that your strength is going!" . . . .

I hope that an answer like this has disarmed for ever the irritable grandmother.

I have also read with a touching interest the whole of the heroic history of the noble and heroic Véry, who has received, through the beneficence of his royal highness the Duke of Bourbon, a worthy recompense of his admirable fidelity. I shall say nothing of the sublime conduct of the woman Rispall, because I have formed on this anecdote a little novel, with which I hope to embellish the new edition of my *Veillées de la Chaumière*.

In spite of my love of Mantes, in spite of the peace, of the good health I have always enjoyed in that pretty town, and the happiness I have tasted in the bosom of a family so virtuous and so dear to me, I shall remain at Paris; a thing which in my case is by no means an inconsistency. I have always had a firm intention of fixing myself in a convent, and there finishing my days; and I only went to Mantes last year because it was impossible for me to find a lodging in the outer part of a convent, or as a boarder with a parlour to myself: there were no vacancies. After passing five months with Casimir in the Rue Neuve Saint Roch, I did not like to abuse his affection for me, by keeping him longer separated from his family;

and having lost the hope of fixing myself in a convent, I accepted the proposal made to me by Casimir, with his usual tenderness, of accompanying him to Mantes, though forced to return hither for a long period in order to superintend the printing of my *Memoirs*, which through many misunderstandings, and the absence of M. Ladvocat, I have hitherto done only imperfectly. I have examined many lodgings in monasteries, and that of the *Dames de Saint Michel* suiting me better than any other, I have just taken it. I shall go thither to fix myself in the convent in three weeks, that is to say, on the 1st October in the present year, 1825.*

My daughter and my grand daughter Madame de Celles have been at Paris for the last few days; they are preparing to go to Italy; and both have demanded of me some information and directions relative to this beautiful country, and the books they ought to take with them. I have reflected, and endeavoured to recollect every thing that could be of any use to them, and I shall make out a little list which I shall give them, to which I shall add a catalogue of the *provisions* which I think necessary in that long journey, in which you

* This was written some months before publication.

scarcely ever can get any thing but bad ham and other salt meat. Madame de Celles takes with her the two charming daughters which are left her. She called on me to-day: I found her greatly changed; her noble physiognomy bore upon it the print of a deep melancholy, which made a profound impression upon me; her fine eyes, which once spoke so eloquently, now expressed only a mournful sadness; when she ceased to speak, they became as if they were veiled; they have no brightness now—they are brilliant no more; her soul, occupied with a single thought, leaves in her face nothing but the touching image of regret and of melancholy.

M. de Celles, who knows and who speaks Italian perfectly, will join them in a month after their departure; he is at present detained in Paris in consequence of some business caused by the inheritance of a great fortune, on which he never reckoned. I should have wished, that Rosamonde, General Gérard, and little Cyrus, had accompanied them; this *caravan* of one family would have lent such an interest to so long a journey! Little Cyrus has so much talent and intelligence that he would have been greatly benefited by it; and it would have been a good method of preparing him for a second journey when his age shall qualify him for gaining

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all the fruits that may naturally be expected from it. But Rosamonde and her husband refuse to confide, for seven or eight months, to a nurse, their two other children of four or five years of age; I offered to take charge of them during that time, and to remain in a lodging which I have hired *without* the convent of the *Dames de Saint Michel*, in the Rue Saint Jacques, with a beautiful garden, near the Luxembourg, in the best-aired part of Paris. I could easily lodge these children and their nurse, and any one may be well assured that I should overlook them with all the zeal in my power. I have never charged myself with a thing and then performed it negligently, and in the present case, my maternal tenderness would be a further guarantee of my vigilance and my attention.

My friend Doctor Alibert has just sent me his last work, bearing the title of *Physiology of the Passions*. It has succeeded admirably, and merits its success for the beautiful ideas it contains, the manner in which it is written, and the originality with which the subject is treated. As it will be read by every one, I shall only quote from it the following passages:

"In the labour of thought all the faculties of the mind aid each other reciprocally; they are vivified by their reunion, and are nothing if they

are separated. What would the memory be without the aid of reflection; and what would reflection be without the office of the memory? It is thus, that in the human body the different functions lend each other a mutual support.

"Bossuet has enunciated a profound maxim in insisting upon the necessity of allying physiology to morals. He believed the union of these two sciences to be true philosophy.* Morality, in fact, never prospers, never extends, and is never inspired but by sentiment. It must be *loved* in order to be understood.

"Philosophy ought only to communicate to the mind grave and serious dispositions; it should endeavour to attain perfect purity, in order to merit the veneration of mortals.

[This is the reason why what is styled *modern philosophy* is not philosophy; for it presents us, in no shape, with the ideas of love and of wisdom.—*Author*.]

"The loftiest doctrines of philosophy have been debased by false hypotheses: it has been at-

* Traité de la connoissance de Dieu et de soi-même.

tempted to submit every thing to the mechanical test of facts: we have constantly mistaken the pure light from which emanate all the rays of the divine faculties, whose harmonious action so much excites our surprise.

"The phenomenon of fear, considered in the moral world, would conduct us to the most extensive discoveries. I might paint it when it reduces to nakedness the egotism of human nature, when it reflects upon the mind the image of the false and servile emotions which degrade it, when it petrifies the soul of its slave, when it stifles the cry of conscience, &c.; but my pen refuses to trace such pictures.

"Fear, as well as courage, therefore, has a certain utility in the dispensations of providence. We triumph over misfortune by means of courage, and we often preserve ourselves from it through fear.

"Emulation is derived from this native attribute of the nervous system, which renders it apt to appropriate to itself whatever tends to ameliorate the condition of humanity; it is the imitative laws put into action. This passion elevates and

multiplies the forces of the mind—it is by means of this passion that man is raised, if we may so speak, to the level of him whose example he proposes to himself as a model."

It may also be said, that though rivalries and consequently pride spring out of too much emulation, that a total want of emulation either springs from a degraded mind or produces one.

Doctor Alibert makes several excellent observations upon emulation, which are too long to be quoted here; and ends by victoriously proving the astonishing effects of that passion, by relating the authentic anecdote of the servant Mary. The following remarkable specimen of eloquence refers to the shameful passion of envy:

"What a deplorable passion is that which is only lighted up in the heart of man to contest with genius its inventions, with talent its labours, with virtue its benefits; which hides or disavows all its subterfuges, and conceals its most odious manœuvres, under the imposing mask of false benevolence! How much he is to be pitied who fills up his days voluntarily with pain and bitterness, who drinks of the impure and venomous sources which his own lips distill, and is self-consumed by the fire of those beams which he is vainly endeavouring to extinguish!

"It is a singular wish of man to desire to perpetuate himself and his name by means of marbles, of a stone, a book, a medal, an inscription—as if all these things were not the prey of time, and as if each century did not, as it were, devour the preceding. You celebrate your glory in a song, forgetting that the language in which it is composed will be one day a dead letter;—when traditions will have disappeared! We live in a world in which nothing remains! Senseless men, *now* let yourselves be slain to illustrate the name of some famous captain!

"In the beautiful climate of Greece, formerly when an unfortunate man felt himself the prey of this devouring passion, the priests of Æsculapius recommended him to go and visit the ruins of Mount Ossa; and his ardent feelings became calm on contemplating the fearful gulfs into which the Titans had been precipitated. He listened to the vain sounds of the waves of the Peneus, as they dashed up into the air and fell down dying, as it were, at he foot of the rocks. He was soon convinced that he was bound calmly to fulfil his destiny, and that the unquiet enjoyments of glory are far from equalling the pure and serene happiness enjoyed by the sage in peaceful obscurity.

" We may advance by means of reason; but we elevate ourselves by enthusiasm. *

" The poets have compared enthusiasm to a flame which always mounts towards heaven, from which it emanates, and which springs up and extends itself perpetually in infinite space.

" How noble and beautiful is that disposition of our being which give to the soul more intelligence in order to comprehend, more eloquence to touch, more tenderness to love! The Holy Ghost, who descended on the Apostles, is the symbol of that supreme faculty which is applied by man to all the species of meditation and of thought.

" Among the physiological phenomena which derive their source from enthusiasm, no one is more remarkable than that of improvisation. This magical talent, which is so astonishing, is but a faculty natural to certain men, of exalting their imaginations at will, so as to enable them to conceive and express, more or less rapidly, a certain number of ideas on any given subject.

" Gestures, looks, and the sounds of the voice,

* When well directed.—(*Author.*)

the accent, &c. &c. contribute to give effect to the words employed by *improvisatori*, and add greatly to the surprise which results from the display of their talents. It is worthy of remark, that they express themselves with more facility in a numerous than in a small auditory."

The author says of gratitude, that, "if among civilized men it were not often changed into another passion, it would be one of the sweetest of our natural impulses.

"A man who is capable of ingratitude should be compared to the man who refuses to discharge the debts which he has contracted. He merits the same punishment: he has violated a contract, he has seized on the time and the credit of his benefactor, and he has employed both as long as he thought proper. Ought he not to repay what he has received, by his feelings, or by similar good offices?

"The victims of ingratitude moreover excite an interest much more lively than those who are the prey of a common misfortune.

"Some one has remarked with reason, that

justice was to the social body what medicine was to the human. In the same way, crimes have been compared to acute maladies, and vices to chronic infirmities. Thus too, punishments, ordained for the purposes of forming an obstacle to the overthrow of social order, may be compared to remedies more or less powerful, which are employed according as the state is more or less corrupted. Penal laws are consequently but curative means, more or less salutarily applied to the innumerable evils which overwhelm society."

One of the most striking anecdotes in this book is that of the soldier of Louis XIV. who retired amidst the savages of French Guiana. There he became, through his activity, goodness, and industry, the benefactor of the savages, whom he taught a better mode of cultivating the plants, trees, and fruits, of that fertile country: the savages, as long as he was useful to them, testified to the Frenchman a gratitude without bounds;—but when our European, who had voluntarily transplanted himself to this wild country, became old and blind, all the male savages, without exception, abandoned him: two negresses only remained faithful, and constantly attended on him till the day of his death. This melancholy catastrophe

leads the author to make the following touching reflection, which it would be impossible for a female author to omit.

"There are none but women who never separate themselves from misfortune. Nature has composed their hearts of so much pity and benevolence, that they seem to be thrown like tutelary beings between man and the vicissitudes of fate."

The author, speaking of that love of our natal soil, which often produces a dangerous malady, thus terminates an interesting chapter:

"It is worthy of remark, that the inhabitants of the country are more subject to this complaint than the dwellers in cities. The peasant always regrets his spade and his plough."

This observation is well founded. The citizen—the inhabitant of a town, in general regrets only its dissipations and its frivolous amusements: while the inhabitants of the country regret their useful labours, and all the solid benefits which they receive from nature.

The author has found, on this subject, a very singular anecdote, that of a female savage, who, at the age of nine, was discovered in Cayenne,

wandering in a forest: a lady took charge of her, and carried her into the civilized part of the island. The young savage received an excellent education, founded on the lights of Christianity: she had masters, and acquired several accomplishments. She preserved, however, so strong a recollection of her mother and her native place, that nothing could vanquish her melancholy; and, at the age of sixteen, she fled from her protectress to return to the savages. The author, carried away by his imagination and his sensibility, admires her conduct, in which I confess I can see nothing at all touching. In fact, this savage, by renouncing her religion, abandoning her benefactress, and rendering useless all that had been done for her, can never appear in my eyes an interesting heroine. I cannot help thinking that vanity, far more than *the love of her natal soil*, had decided her to resolve on quitting a kind of society in which, in spite of her beauty and her talents, she could have excited none of that kind of passionate admiration which springs from great surprise: she probably thought that among the savages she would be the object of genuine adoration, and she sacrificed every thing to that idea. Supposing she had a persuasion of this kind, she ought to have reflected that the approbation of

civilized men is far more flattering than the enthusiasm of a barbarous people. In fact the opinion is very unreflecting which leads us to regard savages as men *in a state of nature.* The Creator has done nothing in vain: and since he has endowed man with so many admirable faculties, he wished that he should make use of them, in order to mark the more distinctly the enormous difference which subsists between the human creature and the brute, which latter is only gifted with the instinct necessary to his preservation and his destiny, and which is common to all his species: so that the savage is but a man *degenerated.* However, in spite of this little critique upon it, I do not think the less that the *philosophy of the passions* is a grand work, which was wanting in our literature, and that in order to supply the deficiency so successfully, it was necessary to be at once a learned physician, an excellent writer, an enlightened observer, and a true philanthropist.

I have learned with certainty a very curious anecdote, relative to Napoleon. When Napoleon was engaged in the Egyptian expedition, M. Desgenettes, so justly celebrated for his abilities, was physician in chief to our armies: we had acquired in our climate a false idea of the plague, regarding it as a mortal disorder, when in truth it

is very often not so. Like the small pox, it is according to its quality, deadly or *mild*—a fact with which all our great physicians are perfectly acquainted. A plague of this latter kind declared itself near Alexandria; but nothing could calm the terrors of the pest-stricken, who regarded the malady as without hope of remedy: their cruel disquietudes augmented the fever, and a great number perished suddenly, victims to their own fancy. Upon this Napoleon commanded M. Desgenettes to declare, in the order of the day, that the contagious malady in question was not the plague; but M. Desgenettes protested that he would not be guilty of publishing a falsehood. Napoleon insisted strenuously: the physician resisted courageously all his menaces, but he yielded at last to the entreaties made to him on behalf of the army: he accordingly declared, without delay, that the disorder existing among the army was not the plague. This was believed—the imaginations of the soldiers were calmed—and all the sick that remained were saved.

In the same campaign, Napoleon besieged Saint Jean d'Acre: when he was before that town, his transports, loaded with ammunition, &c. which he expected, were taken by the brave Sir Sidney Smith: upon this Napoleon saw that it was ne-

cessary to raise the siege; but he wanted a pretext, which his inventive genius speedily found. He caused Desgenettes to be summoned. The latter was confounded at receiving an order quite contrary to that which had formerly been given him:—he was now required to declare that the plague had broken out at Saint Jean d'Acre, and that the General, out of love for his soldiers, had determined on raising the siege. Desgenettes cried out loudly against the promulgation of this new falsehood—Napoleon assumed an imperious and menacing tone—but Desgenettes replied with a virtuous firmness: "Cause me to be shot at once; for you will never succeed in obtaining my consent to sacrifice a second time the truth."

Napoleon then changed his tone, assuring him that he only wished to make him a second time the saviour of the army. "For," said he, "if you refuse, I must devote myself to destruction along with the troops: I shall remain, and we must all perish." Desgenettes was deeply touched: some tears, which he had dropped, were at once the assurance and the bond of his obedience—he announced that the plague had declared itself in Saint Jean d'Acre. The siege was raised, and the grateful army blessed the touching prudence of their general.

The same physician, when at Moscow with Napoleon, opposed the conversion of the Asylum for Orphans into a barrack. "Let us not," said he to Napoleon, "be the means of effacing the only traces of humanity which remain here. Posterity would attribute the deed to your Majesty, and would believe you to have the heart of Herod." —"Of Herod?" said the Emperor; "how can a Herod be here, and how can any one find such a resemblance?"—"In the *massacre of the innocents*," replied Desgenettes.

While walking in his beautiful court, shaded with trees, and in his pretty garden, Doctor Canuet related to me his history, from which I quote some points which well deserve to be narrated. He acquired the art of surgery under the celebrated Dessault. On the opening of the campaign of 1793, he was elected surgeon in chief to the republican army which was sent into La Vendée: he was then but twenty-two years of age. That army was beaten, on the 6th of June, by the royalists, at Viez; and again the next day at the battle of Montreuil: two days afterwards the republicans lost a third battle, which was very sanguinary, near Saumur. Doctor Canuet, while occupied with the cure of the wounded on the field of battle was taken prisoner: but there were

found on him only papers which attested his capacity and good conduct. The Vendeans, charmed at finding no sort of diploma of Jacobinism about him, not even a certificate of civism, proposed to him to side with them, as they were in want of a surgeon. M. Canuet consented. At this time, General Lescure had been dangerously wounded, and his followers had almost decided on the amputation of his arm. They carried to him the papers which had been found upon Dr. Canuet. He desired to see the latter, and struck with the emotion he displayed, he said to him, "Don't be afraid, my friend; I only sent for you to assure you of your full and complete liberty: you are among Frenchmen." The Doctor examined the wounds of M. de Lescure, and strongly opposed amputation: he saved his arm and radically cured him. Immediately on his recovery M. de Lescure reappeared at the head of his division. At the defeat of Parthenay, he was taken prisoner by three hussars of the republican legion of the north, commanded by the fierce Westermann: they threw him from his horse; cut his hat in pieces, because it bore a white cockade; seized his portmanteau and all he had about him; they then passed his horse's halter round his neck, and pulled the rope so tightly, that he felt as if his

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eyes were starting from their orbits: happily, however, the knots had been so hastily made that they speedily loosened. Westermann was more furious than usual, because almost all the army of the Vendeans had escaped his pursuit, through his own fault: he then ordered to be bound together, two by two, the few prisoners he had made, and caused them to march in two files; at the head of which he placed the ill-fated Canuet, because he wore a coat embroidered with gold lace, as surgeon in chief; and during their march the republican soldiers shouted and sung—

> On va leur percer le flanc,
> Rantanplan tire lire
> En plan.
> Ah! que nous allons rire!

They directed their course to Saint Maxent; and at half a league from the town, the general made a halt for the purpose of refreshing his men, but neither gave meat nor drink to his prisoners, who were almost dead with fatigue, hunger, and thirst. Though a great part of Saint Maxent was *patriotic*, no one, when they entered the town, replied to the sanguinary chorus of the revolutionary soldiers. The republican ferocity, in its most exalted shape, seemed to have taken refuge in the camp; because the chiefs of the army, at that time, in-

toxicated the soldiers with a fury far more terrible than the intoxication of ardent spirits. The prisoners were huddled together in garrets: a representative of the people came to examine them, who, touched by the replies of Doctor Canuet, caused bread and water to be distributed to them in abundance: and this meagre fare was to these unfortunate persons a delicious banquet: after they had recovered their strength, they repeated together, with a loud voice, their prayers, and then yielded themselves up to the most peaceful slumbers: on being awakened at the point of day, their first action was again to recite their prayers, which they had not quite finished when they were again compelled to resume their march. M. Canuet met with several young surgeons along with whom he had prosecuted his studies; these young men were not afraid of compromising themselves by openly protecting him; and their conduct, which was equally generous and courageous, was the means of saving his life.

The Doctor now gave himself up entirely to medicine, to surgery, and to the care of the poor: he interfered in no shape with politics: he was throughout but of one *party*—that of suffering humanity: and he sought no places but those in which he could best assuage its sufferings. He

has been since director of several hospitals; and he is at the present day that of the charitable establishments of the quarter of Paris where he resides, and where he gives advice and dispenses medicines gratuitously to all the poor who come to consult him, during two hours, which he consecrates to their assistance: he is, moreover, chief physician to the Hospital of Saint Périne. It is impossible to make a better use of a whole life than he has done, or to employ talents better.

I saw with sincere satisfaction, the night before last, an old friend, the Count de Chastenay, of whom I complained very unjustly:—for four or five years I had heard no news of him or of his amiable family; the cause of which was that he had passed the whole of this time on his estate, upon which he has established great iron works. He told me that Mademoiselle Victorine de Chastenay, his daughter, who is capable of conceiving and undertaking every thing, was of the greatest use to him even in those matters of which the details are so wearisome to a female; but she has nothing of the sex about her but its gracefulness and sensibility. In business, and even in abstract questions, she possesses all the capacity which might be expected in an active and intelligent man. She has just left Paris for the purpose of

renewing the rents of the iron works, and her conduct inspires me with a veneration for her, which goes the length of respect; for with the greatest application, I should never have succeeded in doing any thing to approach this. Nature has endowed Madame Victorine de Chastenay at once with all the innocent art and the superior understanding which are necessary in order to be useful. During the terrible period of the revolution, while in the earliest days of her youth and consequently her experience, she contrived to escape death, and even imprisonment: and in order to save her relatives and other persons who owed their lives to her, she was to be seen in the public offices every morning, soliciting the pardon of some unfortunate victim; in the course of the day she was to be found in the streets, running with indefatigable haste in the hope of rendering some important service; in the evening she was to be seen at the public libraries, employing her leisure in instructing herself, and passing her nights also in reading and writing. Her life was thus admirably employed: it is to hoped she will write *memoirs;* no person existing could leave more interesting ones.

The Count of Narbonne Lara is just dead: he was the brother-in-law of Madame de Choiseul,

who, with incomparable affection, watched by him and attended on him for three nights without consulting her want of strength and the actual state of her own health, which has not been very good for several months past: she afterwards paid the tenderest attentions to her sister, Madame de Narbonne, who had fallen sick in a very alarming way after the death of her husband, who was truly worthy of the regrets of his family, his friends, and all who knew him. He died with the most touching sentiments of religion; and preserving his senses to the very last, he asked for the sacraments with his own voice, and received them. Madame de Choiseul, who has always been so pious, felt a sincere consolation, as well as her virtuous sister, in a death-bed so edifying. Even indifferent persons could not have read unmoved his will, in which are detailed all the possible precautions which could prevent his wife and children from having the disagreeable circumstances attending the formality of sealing up the property, the visits of official people, &c. &c. which so generally aggravate and renew our natural grief. Since the sad event I have seen, Madame de Choiseul and I was deeply impressed with her distress and the sudden change which grief had operated on her amiable countenance.

There is an old verse, well worthy of passing into a proverb, which says—

Qui ne vit que pour soi, n'est pas digne de vivre.

Certainly Madame de Choiseul is well worthy of *living*, for she has never lived but for the objects of her affection; and there is about her so much goodness and such a disposition to oblige:—her very benevolence is so active, when she engages to render a service, that it rather more resembles friendship than mere kindness of heart.

I am sorry to have discővered some errors of the press in the third portion of my *Memoirs*, in the unpublished verses of Madame de Choiseul, there quoted: I can easily submit to errors of this kind when they only regard myself; but I cannot feel the same indifference to them when they injure charming verses which have been intrusted to me, and which the blunders of the printer have rendered altogether unintelligible. When such verses are by a friend, and especially by a friend like Madame de Choiseul, one ought to be inconsolable for the error, and I am so. I ought to add that M. Ladvocat was absent at the time on a journey, for the benefit of his health, when this unlucky subject of complaint occurred; but the first thing he did, when he returned to Paris, was to print can-

cels, to repair the error in all the copies which had not yet been sold. On all occasions, as well as on this, I have had every reason to speak in the handsomest manner of M. Ladvocat, who had the goodness to serve me as secretary for three months, and who joins to all the information which his business requires, the character of a man of honour, and the manners of a man of the world. M. Ladvocat is one of the few booksellers who know how to appreciate the just value of literary persons, and who do not fancy themselves to have got rid of every sentiment of gratitude to their authors when they have paid the bills they have granted them. I understand that he has consecrated to those whose works have contributed to his private fortune, a little domestic monument, which is as honourable to his sentiments as to his taste. It is a magnificent clock, designed in the finest taste, in the ornamental parts of which he has contrived to introduce, in a very ingenious manner, the names of all the writers who have particularly contributed to the reputation of his bookselling establishment. He has the pleasure of counting almost the whole of them among his friends—a thing which of itself would be sufficient to do him honour. With the exception of the worthy and honest Maradan, to whom I have elsewhere

rendered a similar piece of justice, I cannot remember the name of any one bookseller of whom I can say as much. I am the more uneasy about Madame de Choiseul, as she was previously greatly fatigued with the continual labour which her fine poem, *Joan of Arc*, had occasioned her: it is in this *heroic* department of literature that she excels. She is subject to a singing in the head—a humming in the ears: the blood too, frequently mounts to her head, and nothing is more dangerous in such a situation than to be pursued by real talents, and by inspirations which affect the nightly sleep and daily repose of the individual: in such a case the most beautiful genius becomes an *evil genius:* for it harasses, persecutes, inflames the blood, and leads to physical disorders of the most dangerous kind. I have lately heard read several cantos of *Joan of Arc,* which have led me to a persuasion beyond doubt, that the poem will have a most extensive sale: I earnestly hope so, both on account of my affection for the author, and that *esprit de corps* which I believe I alone possess among women. It is in this way that I feel delighted to hear that a lady (Madame Maussion) has just published a translation of Cicero, which in point of style, accuracy, and value of the notes, surpasses infinitely, in merit of every description,

any version which has preceded it. The age of Louis XIV., in which Madame Dacier lived, possessed a famous *Hellenist;* and our's has a female Latin scholar, equally learned and more amiable. Madame de Choiseul will grant me the pleasure of witnessing a woman who has risen with glory to the rank of an epic poet; and it is easy to believe, that the author, who is able to write an excellent epic poem, is capable of writing a fine tragedy.

We have yet other muses who adorn French literature—for example, Mesdames la Princesse de Salm, Devannoz, Madame Amable Tastu, Mademoiselle Delphine Gay, &c. Lastly, if I were disposed to cite the names of all our female authors, who have distinguished themselves by their prose writings, my list would be prodigiously long—and the ladies I should quote would not be displeased to find at the head, Madame la Duchesse de Duras, Mesdames de Staël, de Remusat, Campan, d'Hautpoul, Cotin, de Souza, de Brady, Simon Candeille,* &c. &c.

I have just received the adieus of my daughter and my two grand-children, who leave Paris the day after to-morrow for Italy; I have given them all the instruction which my memory allows on

* Now Madame Perrier.

the subject of this long and beautiful journey; but as they are to return in six or seven months they will not see Italy in all its beauty. I regret sincerely that they will miss the flowers of Mount Cenis, the ivy-garlands of Genoa, of Lombardy, and of Naples, and the delicious temperature of that enchanting country. I confess that the parting of my daughter, at the very moment I am fixing myself for ever at Paris, occasions me the most sensible grief; at my age an adieu, an absence of seven months, which perhaps means ten months or a year, and a distance of five hundred leagues, are all things of a sad and solemn description.

I discovered nothing of these impressions, and that constraint rendered them still more profound. I am besides, in spite of all one can say to me, very uneasy about robbers; my daughter and my grand-daughters will not see these details till they have reached the interior of Italy; by which time they will know that their letters have assured me of their safety; and I love to hope, that under any supposition, the benedictions of a mother, in spite of distance and of robbers, will reach the extremities of the globe; carrying with them all the happiness, and all the efficacy, which the oracles of God promise they shall possess.

My great grandson Cyrus, hearing constantly

the situation of the Greeks spoken of, has become quite devoted to their cause; and learning that a committee had been formed for the purpose of receiving and sending them aid of all kinds, he resolved to give them his pocket money for a year; though of this he already made an excellent use, by employing it for a long time past in the formation of a library for himself; it was to his parents that he confided his noble devotion for the Greeks, and his grandmother (Madame de Valence) promised him on the occasion to double his pocket money. Cyrus, after having thanked her, added, that he would still give the surplus to the Greek Committee, because if he kept to himself the augmentation, it would be no longer *himself*, but his *grandmama*, who contributed to the Greeks; accordingly, to the great satisfaction of his parents, it was decided, that he should have no pocket money; it is true that the boy continually receives examples of this kind; but at eight years of age it is a fine thing to see them thus followed.

I witness, with a joy which I cannot describe, that since the restoration, and especially during the last two or three years, a burst of generosity almost universal among all classes. Without speaking of the sublime actions of the heroic

Véry, of the woman Rispall,* of Madame Rose Perrier, of Mademoiselle du Tremblay, of the two femmes de chambre of the late Comtesse Amélie de Boufflers, &c. we might cite an infinite number of other traits equally touching; every thing seems to presage a happy return to our *mœurs chevaleresques* and to the old French urbanity. The following is a truly French trait, which was related to me by my friend Madame de Choiseul. When she returned from the waters of Plombières, after passing many nights in tears, and fulfilling all the duties of the most affectionate wife, on her way to Paris, carrying in her coach the heart of M. de Choiseul, inclosed in a metal box, she was stopped at all the *douanes,* to undergo the customary visitations always so rigorously performed; but as soon as the custom-house officers saw that the carriage, which was entirely closed, held only a widow overwhelmed with grief, and was loaded with a charge of the saddest and most precious kind, their emotion was every where the same—they all cried out at once, *Laissez passer sans fouiller,* (Let the carriage pass without examination), and

* I have worked this admirable trait into a novel.—(*Note by the Author.*)

neither they nor their servants offered to open the carriage.

I have cited in this work many of the northern customs, which have struck me the more from their resemblance to some ancient Greek customs reported by Athenæus: the following is one of the most singular of all, of which I never heard any one speak; but which seems to me perfectly authentic, as I have heard it related in detail at the table of H. R. H. Monseigneur le Duc d'Orleans, by a traveller of great distinction, who had come from Denmark. A short time before he left that capital, a personage of eminent rank died, and this traveller was invited to his funeral. He arrived at the hotel which had been occupied by the deceased; entered the hall where the company was assembled, waiting for the funeral repast which is given on all such occasions throughout the greater part of Germany; in about a quarter of an hour all the company passed into the dining-room; on the table a repast was placed, and the stranger was told that the party was to eat hastily and without being seated.* What was his surprise when casting his

* As the reader has seen in the account I have given of the funeral repast of M. Plock, to which I was invited.—(*Note by the Author.*

eyes on the table he saw a *surtout* of the most extraordinary kind of which any one ever conceived the idea. It was the corpse of the defunct dressed in a robe of white satin embroidered with gold, and a cap to correspond. The corpse, with its uncovered and hideous visage, had its hands crossed on its breast, and lay extended in the midst of the table; and as it had been previously exposed after death during eight or ten days, the exhalations arising from it were far more powerful than those coming from the ragouts of the feast. All the guests at once lost their appetite, and all hastened to return to the saloon. I am assured that this strange custom is only observed in the case of personages of the highest rank.

Since the publication of my *Memoirs*, the number I have received of anonymous and acknowledged letters, (of which many are signed by persons unknown to me), is scarcely credible; to give my readers some idea of it, I shall state, that though several of these letters have reached me *free*, yet from the 1st of September to the 29th, the day on which I write this, I have paid eighty-three francs for postage, and I have often gone to bed without having had time to read all those received in the course of the day; and what sur-

prises me most is, that in this great number I have only received one malevolent letter, which was not however at all abusive; apparently this is caused by pity for old age, for not more than twelve or fifteen years ago, I was treated with infinitely more rigour.

M. le Comte de Chastenay has again come to visit me; and this time he was accompanied by Madame de Chastenay; of course he was doubly well received. Madame de Chastenay is always perfectly amiable; she has preserved all the gaiety which renders her mildness so *piquant!* How much we spoke of old times! and how many anecdotes she recalled to me which I had forgotten, and which would have charms far more if related by her than quoted by my old pen! M. de Chastenay gave me a little note which she had promised me relative to the siege of Sarragossa. This trait, which I have never seen in any work, well merits relation. It is as follows: during the siege of Sarragossa, by the French under Napoleon, it was remarked, that the church of Notre-Dame d'*Epillard,* so famous for divers miracles, was not merely the only church, but the only edifice in the town which no bullet had touched. This sort of prodigy exalted the piety of all the inhabitants; they had lost all hope of

defending themselves successfully, but at the same time they were resolved not to yield, and foreseeing that in forty-eight hours the French would enter the town and put every one to the sword and commit all to the flames, they determined unanimously to demand for themselves a funeral service, at which they should all assist; and this was executed according to their desire. All the inhabitants went to the church d'Epillard, which was hung with black. The priests began by reading the prayers for the dying, to which all replied with equal fervour and firmness; afterwards the service for the dead was celebrated. So much piety joined to so much valour in its most admirable form—so much coolness and resolution, present a scene of the most imposing and sublime kind; in short, as M. de Chastenay says in his notice, these unfortunate inhabitants on that solemn occasion, united and consecrated at once religion with honour, and love of their country with martyrdom.

There is now living a charming young man, who inspires me with such interest from his good education, his manners, his excellent understanding, and his modesty, that I have made an engagement with him to write to him once a fortnight, to which he replies punctually. Our correspondence

commenced six weeks ago; I hope it will be of some use to him; to me it is infinitely agreeable, and we look reciprocally for our letters with the greatest impatience; I flatter myself that he will never find any pedantry in mine. I am surprised at the solidity and intelligence he displays constantly in his answers—though he possesses all the vivacity which so well becomes persons of his age, when they can contain it within due bounds, and when it does not spring from want of reflection.

The counsels of a respectable father and mother have doubtless on a young man of good principles a kind of supreme authority, especially in all that regards our duties; but those parents who would not omit one exhortation of this kind have not time to enter into an infinite number of precise, minute, and even frivolous details; which, nevertheless, when a young man makes his first appearance in the world, and in the commerce of society are not without their utility. It is to be desired that those who possess cultivated minds, and all the qualities that are truly attaching, should, at the same time display them in those agreeable forms which adorn virtue and contribute to render it beloved; it is for this reason that there is always something *moral* in teaching the legiti-

mate means of pleasing. Grace, in a thousand instances, springs chiefly from delicacy of sentiment; and then its charm is inexpressible, because there is nothing in it affected, it is always natural; it belongs only to innocence, to simplicity of manners, and to purity of the soul. These are things which an *aged friend* may develope and demonstrate in a variety of amusing forms in an epistolary correspondence. I wish all young princes had correspondents of this kind without suspecting it, while their minds are forming; and, that though intended for their instruction, the letters they received should only be regarded by them as an agreeable amusement. How useful such letters would be, especially in a rank where, as soon as the youth leaves the charge of his teachers, he is surrounded and besieged by flatterers, while he is weary of the lessons and the sermons he has been forced to hear for fifteen or sixteen years! . . . . I might add largely to these reflections, but I have said enough on the subject, to satisfy those fathers and mothers, that regard it as worthy of attention.

I have this instant received an anonymous but charming letter,* and having no other means of

* Signed Adèle de R . . . .

replying to the writer, but by inserting it in the present work, I have determined on doing so. The writer of this letter, which is full of cordiality and kindness, informs me that she reads my *Memoirs*; therefore she will find in them the only answer which I can make; and she may be assured it is not through vanity that I here quote her pretty verses. Who does not know that poetry authorizes, and even requires, exaggerated praises? I quote these verses, like the others with which I have embellished my *Memoirs*, only to do honour to the talent of the amiable writer who addresses them to me. As I have said, the author at first writes in prose, and then concludes her letter with the following verses:

Aprés avoir charmé nos meres,
Tes écrits simples et touchans
Iront, trésors héréditaires,
Charmer de même nos enfans.
Ainsi nous suivant d'âge en âge,
Comme un astre d'heureux présage,
A l'enfant tu donnes un cœur,
Un Mentor à l'adolescente,
A la mère une confidente,
A l'aïeule, un consolateur;
Et la viellesse rajeunie,
Oubliant l'âge et les douleurs,
Trouve en toi la dernière amie
Qui pour elle embellit de fleurs

Les derniers sentiers de la vie.
L'âge accumule en vain les ans
Sur ce front qu'Apollon inspire,
Les fronts qu'il couvre de sa lyre,
Ne craignent point la faulx du Temps.
La Mort qui de loin nous menace,
La Mort que précèdent les pleurs
Est sans pouvoir sur le Parnasse;
Et te jouant de ses fureurs,
Au sein d'une éternelle vie,
Tu t'enivreras d'ambroisie,
Avec les Muses tes neuf sœurs.
Sans doute, quand ta main docile,
Saisit le luth doux et facile
Que tant de larmes ont baigné,
Tu dis: "Loin des routes vulgaires,
Oui, j'irai près de Deshoulières
Retrouver Staël et Sévigné."
Le ciel entendit tes prières,
Et ces vœux, tu nous l'as prouvé,
N'étaient pas des *vœux téméraires.**

After many a long and fruitless search, undertaken both by my friends and myself, I have at length found in a convent (as I have said) a lodging which suits me. I have passed four entire months in the *Maison de Santé,* superintended by Doctor Canuet, and I carry with me, in leaving it, many sincere regrets to have no longer his amiable

* Allusion to one of my works bearing this title.—(*Note by the Author.*)

and virtuous family for neighbours. I am now fixed at the Dames Saint Michel. I yesterday took a walk in their large garden: I wished to pay a visit to madame la prieure, but the religious lady who had the goodness to accompany me in my walk told me she could not receive me, as she was ill in consequence of a violent chagrin, caused by the tragical and touching death of a lady to whom she was particularly attached. The following is a history of her sudden death: There were repairs going on at the extremity of the gardens, in a large building which was falling into ruin; the nun in question, who was still in the flower of her age, was resolved, moved by a celestial sentiment, to pass the whole of the day among the ruins, which was not employed in her religious duties; for she had remarked that the masons, during their work, used expressions and sung songs worse than profane, and which the boarders at the convent, in their walks, could not help hearing. She felt certain, that her presence would repress their licence; so she went and sat down on a stone among the ruins, amidst a thick cloud of dust. One morning the masons represented to her that the place which she had chosen was very dangerous; but she, thinking they only wished to get rid of her presence, remained; when

suddenly a large beam fell upon her head and wounded her mortally: a priest and a surgeon were sent for immediately; she had all her senses, but she had only time to receive the sacraments, and expired half an hour afterwards.

What piety and purity of soul this person must have had, merely for the purpose of preventing an evil which assails us at our windows and in the streets! . . . . . Some licentious expressions! . . . .

The garden is very large; there is in it an immense alley, well shaded: the rest of the garden is arranged as a *kitchen* one, and contains four fabrics, which are four chapels, the one dedicated to the Holy Virgin, the second to Saint Augustin, the third to Saint François de Sales, and the fourth to Saint Michael. I should wish that in the chapels of Saint Augustin and Saint François de Sales inscriptions should be placed, taken from their sublime works.

Casimir is absent at the present moment; for a long time back, change of air and travelling had been recommended to him for the benefit of his health; but an important affair having called him at length to a distance, he was forced to leave Paris, believing he should return in time to witness my removal; but, though I did not at first intend to quit Chaillot before the 15th of October, I left

it on the 1st. I had received, a few days before, the adieus of Casimir, who came in person to present them, escorted by two large baskets of Fontainbleau grapes, to assure himself, as he said, of my good health in his absence; for he knows that these grapes are, in my case, a real panacea. I have lately heard from him, and he will soon return hither.

I had consented to make a great sacrifice to his interests, by resolving to change my residence without his assistance; for his attentions to me on such occasions, as on all others, are inappreciable. M. Ladvocat has, in this respect, supplied his place, with a zeal, an exactitude, and a friendship of which I can never lose the recollection;—a thing which will be the more easy to me, as the vivacity of his manner, his honour, and his frankness please me extremely. I completed my acquaintance with him at Chaillot, where he came during a great part of the summer and almost all the autumn, to write under my dictation or to converse with me.

M. de Lawoëstine and his charming daughter Léocadie have paid me, for the last five weeks, attentions, for which I feel the more gratitude as they have been during all that time occupied with the care of Madame la Comtess de Fagan, sister

of M. de Lawoestine, during her last illness; they passed several nights with her. M. le Comte de Fagan, a short time before his mother died, was obliged to join his regiment. This young man, who is full of sensibility and talent, is the best of sons; his grief at parting was most lively, though he felt certain that his cousin would take his place by the side of his mother, and fill it with equal zeal and affection. From that moment Léocadie went to attend on her aunt, and never quitted her till she was no more. It was she only who was by her during her nervous attacks, and her convulsions, of which the violence was almost unexampled. Madame de Fagan would not suffer, in these terrible crises, a nurse or a *femme de chambre* to approach her; Léocadie alone, whether by day or night, could hold her in bed and prevail upon her to take the medicines prescribed for her. Yet in spite of her watchings, her fatigues of body, and her uneasiness and agonies of mind, Léocadie contrived, by availing herself of a few instants of calmness, to run to my house, and to render me several services by occupying herself with an infinite number of little details relative to my removal. Her father, whom she very often sent for in the middle of the night, came to me constantly every day for three weeks, and often twice a day, to ask

for my *commissions*, and he continually was taking long walks on my account. How beautiful and how worthy of praise is such activity, when it springs from so much goodness of heart! . . . . .

Madame de Fagan received all the sacraments yesterday, and it was the pious Léocadie who had the courage to declare to her her imminent danger; but this was done with all the delicacy, inspired by a prudence very uncommon at her age, and which Christian charity of the highest description can alone bestow. Madame de Fagan performed this last and great action of her life in the most edifying manner; while waiting for the viaticum and extreme unction, she requested Léocadie to repeat to her the prayers for the dying; to which she made the responses in a tone expressive at once of firmness and resignation. M. de Lawoestine, who was present at the solemn ceremony, told me that Léocadie, who was kneeling by the bedside of her aunt, had her face bathed in tears, and yet she preserved such a command over herself, that a slight faultering of her voice was all that could indicate her emotion. This did not surprise me, for I have always seen during my long life, that genuine sensibility always communicates strength of mind on all necessary occasions.

Anatole de Montesquiou has come to visit me

several times since my removal hither. He mildly reproached me with not having inserted in my *Memoirs* some verses by his grandfather, who joined the talents of a warrior to those of a poet; a happy and brilliant conjunction, which we now see renewed in his grandson, and in a remarkable manner as to poetry; Anatole can, moreover, celebrate his own warlike exploits and those of his companions in arms both on the harp and the piano;* he can also *paint* them, for he draws in a charming style. I shall parody for him the first couplet, so well known, written for Henry IV.:

Ce diable à quatre
A le triple talent
De *peindre* et de battre,
En rimant et chantant.

If I were not at the close of my Memoirs, I should here insert many verses by the ancestor of Anatole, but I have no longer room for them; and, besides, Anatole intends to publish the poems in question, under the title of *Mélanges*; the reader will there peruse, with pleasure, the pretty verses which M. de Montesquiou wrote on the departure

* Every one knows what military talents and what brilliant valour were displayed by Anatole in the army, and particularly during she unfortunate Russian campaign.—*(Note by the Author.)*

of Monseigneur Comte d'Artois,* for the siege of Gibraltar; his eagerness for that expedition, his valour, the sentiments, so noble and so truly French, which the young prince displayed on that occasion, are admirably described in these verses, as well as his conduct during the siege.

I have this instant received a letter from Madame de Lascours; it is needless to say, that this letter is charming and worthy of preservation; for she never writes any of another description. She relates a thing which interests me deeply—she says that at the château de Duigny, near Sédan, she has just completed her fine collection of miniatures and portraits of the most celebrated personages, the whole copied from the pictures of the best masters, and with a truth and resemblance the most perfect. I never saw any thing so fine and so complete in this way. I have heard David, who greatly admired her works, say, that this interesting collection was unique; because it had none of the *servility* of copies in general. Madame de Lascours, though she paints and designs admirably, has always confined herself to copying; so that, having no peculiar manner of her own, she seizes with great facility that of the painters whom

* Now H. M. Charles X.

she imitates. She has also executed another work equally curious and admirable—the windows of the cathedral of Auch, the most famous in France. They have been at all times so celebrated, that Marie de Médicis gave orders for their transport to Paris; but the chapter of the cathedral succeeded in getting the order revoked. Madame de Lascours has contrived to copy with great perfection these superb windows, preserving all their transparency, and the dazzling brilliancy of their colouring; nothing so perfect has ever been done in this style. How can one avoid admiring a person who possesses such talents and in so high a degree, and yet joins to them a rare modesty? She finds their just reward in her children, whose talents, virtues, and intelligence would suffice to give her also the character of the best of teachers of youth.

Since I have been in this house, I have received a very great number of visits, among others, yesterday, that of my niece Henriette, and that of my cousin Vice-admiral Sercey; the latter showed me a letter from M. de Peyronnet, first, truly charming from the talent with which it is written, second, from the admirable account it gives of the young Edward de Sercey, whom his father several months ago placed in the navy. I have never read an eulogy more complete, or more honourable, or

written with so much precision; M. de Peyronnet assures the father, at the conclusion of his letter, that the young man, who is only eighteen, will honourably maintain the high reputation of his father in the navy, and that which his brother Eole has already obtained in the marines; and that in two years he will be a superior and consummate officer. I should have liked to enrich these *Memoirs* with this letter, but the modesty of M. de Sercey led him to refuse to leave it with me for that purpose.

I had the curiosity, two or three days since, to pay a visit to the Cul-de-sac St. Dominique, which is but a few steps from hence, and where I passed the most brilliant days of my early youth, from the age of eighteen up to twenty-two; we had very handsome apartments, on the first floor, looking out on a pretty garden, at the end of which was a little door opposite the parish church of *St. Jacques-du-Haut-Pas;* there it was that my three children, my two daughters and my son, were baptized. My brother-in-law and his wife, occupied the ground floor of the house; as it happens to be the last in the Cul-de-sac St. Dominique, I immediately recognised the door; but on entering the court, I saw that every thing was changed, as

might have been expected in the course of half a century and more; I questioned the porteress, who told me that it was only within ten years that the apartments had been altered, and that in order to double their number, they had been lessened; that the master of the house was absent, and that it was impossible to admit me. I returned in a melancholy mood, regretting that I could not describe the impressions which the sight of them would have made on me, and which would doubtless have been very lively; but though it might have suggested some new and moral ideas for the benefit of others, could only have awakened in me regrets and painful recollections! What use have I made since that period of the fifty-eight years which Providence has deigned to grant me? Alas, I have done but little good! at least in the eyes of him who judges of actions only by their motives! So many real faults, so many imprudences, wrong steps, thoughtless actions, puerilities, romantic vanities, and follies of all kinds! So many deceitful joys, real misfortunes, false hopes, dangerous delusions and errors I have experienced! . . . . . Alas, in this house the *future* was once before me. If I had not spoiled it, with what joy should I again behold it! how happy

should I now be! . . . . . . But let us not murmur, for we ought to ask pardon of God, even for the greater part of our misfortunes.

Madame de Choiseul did a charming thing for me: she wished to visit my old house, but I prevented her, by assuring her that she would not know it again, it was so changed; Madame de Choiseul, however, went and prayed for me in the parish church, where I went three times to return thanks, after my *accouchement*, and where, consequently, as I have already stated, my three children were baptized—and of these three children, there now remains alive but one! . . . . I cannot tell how grateful I feel for the touching and delicate sentiment which led Madame de Choiseul to that church to pray for me; her prayer, which doubtless was a fervent one, will bring down on me the favour of heaven. I am reminded of a fine passage in Holy Writ, which says, "A faithful friend is a strong protection; he who hath found one possesseth a treasure." (Ecclesiasticus, chap. vi.)

I have just conceived an idea that may prove useful to youth; I shall therefore insert it here: I think all young people, entering on the world, should compose a work called "*My Life, or my imaginary Memoirs.*" In terminating the

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education of youth subjects of composition are given which are isolated and have no connection with each other; consequently, they can only leave vague ideas in the mind; a settled work, divided into chapters, would not have this fault, and it would have the advantage of connecting, by a useful link, many scattered moral ideas, which exist in the imaginations of youth, and which the various occupations of college must have excited.

The education of men never being finished till the age of eighteen, at the soonest,* I propose that young people, at the great epoch of their entrance into life, should compose the *plan* of the work I have suggested above, with the consent and advice of some intelligent guide; for example, the first chapter should contain a detail of the opinions and sentiments, which a virtuous young man should carry into society, his manner of conducting himself, the duties of reserve, modesty, politeness, respect for age and experience, the method of instructing himself by means of conversation, &c. The second chapter should treat of the various seductions to which young men are exposed, and the way to triumph over them. The other

* In England young men do not leave the Universities till the age of twenty and twenty-one, which of itself is a great advantage.—(*Note by the Author.*)

chapters should speak of the way in which they should travel—how to bear reverses of fortune, and lastly, how to fulfil the sacred duties of son, husband, father, &c. I should particularly recommend the young man so to write, as if he were always the hero of his own composition, and that, in all difficult situations, he should constantly ask the advice and counsels of his Mentor; in this kind of fiction, he should give himself the character to which he should actually aspire, that is to say, the religious sentiments, steady principles, courage, force of mind, and perseverance, which enable us to triumph over all seductions and all obstacles.

It is too generally believed, that a pure character and an irreproachable life are chimeras, and that there are weaknesses and faults which are amiable and interesting. There is nothing so *amiable* as perfection, and nothing more *interesting* than strength of mind when united to sensibility; and as to moral perfection, history and particular observations made in the course of a long life, suffice to show that such perfection is neither chimerical nor ideal.

History displays many personages truly perfect, even in a rank where virtue has most seductions to combat and finds the greatest facilities to err.

In ancient history, we have Vespasian, Titus, Marcus Aurelius, the Antonines, and Trajan. In modern history, Saint Louis, Queen Blanche, his mother; Charles V., called the Sage; Marie d'Anjou, wife of Charles VII.; Jeanne d'Arc, Saint Vincent-de-Paul, Saint François-de-Sales, and many other saints and missionaries, all our great orators, who are at the same time the most useful of all moralists, and, consequently, benefactors of the human race, &c. &c. Among foreigners, are Cantacuzenus, Carlo Zeno, at Venice; Alfred the Great in England, &c. &c. &c.

The life and characters of all these personages were irreproachable and without a stain. And how many persons in society may be quoted, who were as pure—how many exist even in our own day! To this it is that youth should aspire—it is the only kind of ambition that will not deceive them; all others are either senseless, or frivolous, or blamable. In commencing these imaginary memoirs, the writer should start from the point at which he actually is, and give himself neither another family, nor other friends,—unless, indeed, he means to show that, without the vile assistance of intrigue, a man may, by means of superior talents, a fine disposition, an excellent reputation, and perseverance, rise in society, and be the

founder of a large fortune: in such a case, the author may suppose himself the son of a poor artisan, and compose a romance of pure invention from the beginning to the end. If the writer states his *real* circumstances, the first twelve or fifteen pages will be the mere truth; but afterwards, when he has entered on the world, every thing should be invented which can put the principles and virtue of the author to the proof; in every critical situation, real or fictitious, he should have recourse to the counsels of his confident and director in his memoirs. After having undergone his first trials, he should travel: here he may give free scope to his imagination, by inventing all the extraordinary or tragical adventures he pleases; but one part of the narrative should be exact and faithful—I mean that in which are described the places which he visits, whether in France, any part of Europe, or the other quarters of the globe; he must, therefore, read with strict attention all the works of the most celebrated travellers, especially those of M. de Humboldt; he must also possess, at least a superficial knowledge, of botany and natural history, and that he should have some notions about long voyages. This part of his memoirs may hereafter serve him at once as a

journal and a guide, by adding merely a few observations from his own judgment.

I might say many other things on this subject; but I think I have stated enough to demonstrate the great utility of this species of composition, which, while it taught the author to think and to write, would guard him, as much as possible, against the dangers of the world; it would prepare the mind to sustain, without shrinking, the vicissitudes of human life, the rigours of fortune, and the seductions of prosperity; it would furnish the studious with a constant and interesting subject; it would bring continually into action all the great moral truths; and, finally, would identify the the author with a perfect being.

If this idea is a good one, enlightened and virtuous parents will know how to take advantage of it according to the character and disposition of their children, far better than I can here point out.

My friend, Madame de Saulty, came to take me, along with her amiable children, Albert and the young Henriette, to the Jardin de Plantes, where we had an agreeable walk; we there found M. de Saulty, and M. Cuvier, with his charming family, who had the goodness to show us every thing. We first saw the wild animals—a lion,

very beautiful and majestic, reminded me of M. de Buffon; the face of that great writer in reality resembled that of a lion. I saw, for the first time, an elephant in miniature; it was no larger than a calf, and looked hideous. The elephant is the only animal that has not pretty little ones; he himself is so grand and so imposing, that no one is struck with his ugliness; the air of great strength, without ferocity, only excites ideas of nobleness and majesty—in a small elephant you are only struck with the monstrosity of its shape. From hence we were taken into the galleries of natural history: I particularly remarked an admirable bird, lately discovered, of which the feathers form exactly, by the way in which nature has arranged them, a beautiful antique lyre; accordingly, this bird has been named *the lyre*. I hope that henceforth the *swan* will be no longer the erroneous emblem of music and poetry. M. Cuvier explained to us all these things, with a clearness, politeness, and urbanity, which render him as amiable in society as he is distinguished by his knowledge and his talents.

Though I never go out but to walk, I could not help one day paying a visit to M. Alibert. There were a great many people at his house, a thing which I did not expect; among the number was

an amiable and pretty woman, the Viscountess de Nays, whose charming face no one could forget after once seeing it, and which leaves an impression the sweeter and more lasting, from its being joined to a pure reputation, and perfect good conduct. I had the pleasure of hearing and talking with her more than an hour, and during that time it was impossible to display more sound judgment, better principles, or more virtuous sentiments.

She told me an anecdote of the revolution so surprising and so original, that I cannot help repeating it here.

The Viscountess de Candau, grandmother of the lady above mentioned, lived at Pau, where she was universally revered for her piety and her great charity; she possessed a large fortune. She was eminently pious and of the royalist party; she was summoned before the revolutionary tribunall, by which she was condemned to die; her sentence produced a lively sensation at Pau; the poor of the place assembled in a body, and made several applications in her favour. However, in spite of the pretended equality, that class, though numerous, had not been admitted into the number of *citizens;* they were not listened to, and the day of execution was fixed; but a very extraordinary

incident forced her persecutors to postpone it. The executioner, more equitable and humane on the occasion than her judges, positively refused to guillotine Madame de Candau; they threatened him in vain, nothing would intimidate him. Upon this another executioner was sent for from Tarbes, who, as he did not belong to the town of Pau, could not feel the same veneration for Madame de Candau. However, what he heard from every one concerning her made a profound impression on his mind. By the law of the time, every thing about the person of those condemned to the scaffold became, after death, the property of the executioner. After Madame de Candau was no more, there was found about her a beautiful gold snuff-box, which the executioner refused to keep. He took it at the time; because it would have been impossible for him, without risking his own life, to have sent it direct to her family, but he took such prudent precautions, that the precious snuff-box sometime after was faithfully transmitted to Madame de Candau's relatives, who formed of it a most touching monument. They placed it in a beautiful funeral vase, bearing an inscription taken from the Holy Bible, on the death of the righteous.

This story interested me the more, as it con-

firmed me in a consoling opinion to which I was led by several observations made during and after the reign of terror.

I have remarked that, to the honour of the French nation and of human nature, every atrocity was always expiated by some sublime action performed in the same situation. For example, we have seen fathers and masters denounced by children and servants, but we have also seen many of both who devoted themselves for the sake of parents and superiors. Women, in order to avoid death, have declared themselves falsely to be pregnant with illegitimate children, and the beautiful and young Princess Josepha de Monaco preferred death to making such a false and ignominious declaration. While impious men were blaspheming and committing the most horrible sacrilege, millions of saints offered themselves to martyrdom and died with joy on the scaffold; while timid men refused shelter to their relatives and friends, a prodigious number of persons of all ages and of both sexes exposed themselves to death, and underwent it in order to save strangers and unknown persons who had been proscribed. In the history of this disastrous period were found the same contrasts respecting money; faithful and generous depositaries expiated the faults of un-

faithful ones, &c. &c. But I had not found a sublime action to contrast with the behaviour of the young man, whose story I believe I have already told, who, at La Rochelle, in a moment of *enthusiasm*, proposed to the Jacobin Club of the town to guillotine, with his own hand, twenty-two emigrants, who had been made prisoners with arms in their hands, in order that their execution might not be deferred, owing to the executioner's dangerous illness, and confinement to his bed. The proposal was accepted with transport, and the *glorious* title of "Avenger of the People" * was, by acclamation, decreed to this young man, who proved himself worthy of the honour, by executing the following day, with his own hand, twenty-two of his countrymen. I was unable to find a contrast to this execrable action, till I heard the story of the executioner of Pau; this gave me the idea of a book which might be made very interesting if it were written without verbiage; the contrast of good and evil actions produced by the revolution.

I saw also at Doctor Alibert's a young person, who interested me deeply through her strong resemblance to her father, who had a charming

* It was unanimously confirmed by the Convention; this authentic story, in all its atrocity, is to be found in the Moniteur. (*Note by the Author.*)

face, and for whom I felt a tender friendship—I mean M. de Boisjolin. He was attached to the education of the princes, whom I brought up; and though then very young he had fine talent for poetry, which was already celebrated; besides his excellent reputation, the purity of his morals, the mildness of his disposition, and his extreme modesty, led me to choose him in preference to many others, to fill the place of reader to the young princes; his conduct with regard to them was constantly admirable, and his behaviour was so excellent as to win him the esteem of every one. Though my predilection for him was well known, and though every one saw, perhaps too clearly, that I preferred his conversation to the company of any of the other persons officiating in the education of the princes, yet by some inexplicable accident, I have not mentioned him in my *Memoirs*. I have, however, made frequent mention of him in the manuscript *Journal of the Education*, in thirteen volumes, which I had the the honour to present to H. R. H. the Duke of Orleans, a journal which must be inestimable to him, since from the age of eight up to seventeen years and a half, every instant of his existence, and that of the princes his brothers, is accounted for.

On my first return to France, M. de Boisjolin came to see me at the Arsenal; a thing which sincerely rejoiced me; he has since almost constantly been living in the provinces; he is Sous-préfet at Evreux; all the journals of the period gave just eulogies to the verses of the young poet; particularly to a charming piece entitled *les Fleurs*, which he published in 1786, and in which occurs that interesting episode, *the metamorphosis of the tulip*, which is entirely of his own invention; he deserves equal credit for it as a poet and as a moralist.

The success of this little poem was so brilliant and so universal, that the author afterwards extended the work; he changed its title; and that piece of verse, now become truly a poem (and still in manuscript), is entitled *les Paysages*. M. de Boisjolin has undertaken all the excursions which such an enterprise required. We are assured that the public will soon enjoy the fruits of his labours.

A prince justly celebrated for his personal merit and his virtues, his majesty the King of Prussia, came incognito to Paris under the name of the Comte de Rupin; every one was enchanted with his goodness, talents, and affability. For myself having during the emigration, passed two years

at Berlin, I shall never forget the tranquillity and security his people enjoyed under his government, nor how accessible and popular is a monarch so worthy of being one. I rendered him a homage which will not be suspected of flattery long after my return to France; in the second volume of my *Souvenirs de Félicie,* at a moment when Napoleon was at Berlin as a conqueror! . . . . One of my friends, Madame de Lingré, has possessed from her youth a faculty so astonishing, or rather so miraculous, that I must give some account of it here; without having studied in the least mathematics, or geometry, she can, by means of an extraordinary gift of nature, resolve in a few minutes the most difficult and complicated problem of whatever kind it may happen to be. Wishing me to be a witness of this phenomenon, she requested me to invite one of the most famous mathematicians of France (of my own choosing) to pass the evening with me, in order to propose to her problems, of which she was to give at once a solution. I accordingly invited M. de Prony, who came to my house on the 29th of October: he brought with him three problems, which he had carefully composed for that visit; and the following, without any exaggeration, is a detail of what took

place. M. de Prony read the enunciation of the first problem: Madame de Lingré put her hands upon her eyes, telling us that we might converse as usual, and in two minutes she gave a perfect solution of the problem. The same thing occurred with the two others, and M. de Prony several times repeated that, such a gift of nature was altogether inexplicable. This prodigy delighted me, both as a woman and as the friend of Madame de Lingré, and the more, as the latter enjoyed her triumph with her usual simplicity and modesty. I also enjoyed the touching sentiments of her excellent son on the occasion. I have already spoken of him in these *Memoirs*, with the praises due to his amiable disposition, and to his superior and distinguished understanding.

If Madame de Lingré had been a man, her marvellous talent would certainly have gained for her the high celebrity which conducts to great situations: but though she is a woman, it appears to me, that, under any government, she merits well some distinguishing mark of honour. As I have the *esprit de corps*, which in general women do not possess, I am proud of the successes and brilliant talents of all my female contemporaries. I am proud of our Latin scholar, Madame Maussion; and I felt great pleasure in hearing my friend, M.

Lemaire, render due homage with his usual candour to the talents of that lady. Such a suffrage, in her case, is well worth an academic crown; for among the things which adorn our age may be reckoned the great undertaking of reprinting all the classic authors, superintended by M. Lemaire, who has added his own learned and judicious notes to this work. I do not think the brilliant age of Louis XIV. could boast of any woman who excelled in painting; but ours can cite, in different styles of the art, the names of Mesdames Lebrun, de Grollier, Jacotot, Lescot, Pagès, Hersent, &c. &c. To me the age owes a female *architect* and a female *sculptor*, Mesdemoiselles Charpentier, whose studies I have assisted from their infancy; but their talents and fame have been confined to the town of Orleans.

Many years before this, there lived in England a lady of the court, who showed great talents for sculpture. Among other works, she executed a colossal statue of George III. This statue stands in one of the public squares of London. On my first visit to England, I had the pleasure of seeing this lady in her sculpture room; she was then young and handsome.

My young friend, Gérono, has just been received a member of the royal academic society for

sciences; a most estimable society, of which all the members are so well chosen, that it is truly honourable to be admitted into it.

M. Gérono has composed music for my ballad, *l'Aveugle,* which I gave him, and which has not yet appeared. He conceived the ingenious and beneficent idea of making the song be sang two or three mornings in the streets of Paris, by a chorister who had a pretty voice, and who, while he thus participated in the good work, should at the same time lead a blind man about with him. The following enigma, by M. Gérono, appeared in the *Drapeau blanc;* the enigma seems to me pretty and original, though it is very easy to gues: its meaning:

> Pour dévoiler tout mon mystère,
> Et pour vous épargner des efforts superflus;
> Doublez un certain nombre et certains vertus,
> Et vous devinerez mon nom, mon caractère.

The answer is Charles X. which doubles the number of five, and that of the virtues of Charles V. called *the Sage.*

M. Gérono has a sister who possesses a distinguished talent for painting in miniature.

I find myself still compelled, to my great regret, to change my lodgings: though my present apartments are very ill-looking and very lofty, I might

have contented myself with them; but they are icy cold, and I should have to employ all the skins of a whole flock of sheep in stopping the cracks and holes in them; besides, the windows have no shutters, and there is no antichamber to the apartments, so that the domestics of the people who come to visit me are obliged to remain in the court, which is quite insupportable in winter. Doctor Alibert, who in spite of his useful and numerous occupations always finds time to serve his friends, however great may be the distance to which his good-nature calls him, has looked for and found me a very pretty and commodious lodging, with a pure air, and every thing which can be agreeable to me: I went to see it yesterday, hired it, and shall enter on the possession of it in eight or ten days.

Yesterday I again returned to the composition of my last historical romance, *Alfred le Grand*, dedicated to Madame de Choiseul, to whom I had promised the dedication of my last work of this kind. *Pétrarque et Laure* was not my last; but *Alfred* will certainly be so: my age of itself is sufficient to answer foı this. Besides it would be impossible for me to find a finer subject, or a more perfect hero. This work is considerably advanced, and will be quite finished in five or six weeks at latest.

I have now been for some days in the Rue Neuve-de-Berri, in a house for the education of young ladies, conducted with much ability by Madame de Bannières, who seems to me to have all the qualities, both amiable and solid, which are requisite to secure the success of a similar establishment.

I have now terminated my *Memoirs*; and I may say with the truth, if not with the merits of the Apostle: "I have fought the good fight—I have finished my course—I have kept the faith." *

* If my career, already so long, is prolonged, I shall give the public successively the following works, which I have already planned: 1. *The Labruyère of the Antichamber*, or, *Characters of some Servants of the Age*; a moral and useful work, which in general would be treated in a comic way. 2. *The Soupers de la Maréchale de Luxumbourg*, to serve as a sequel to the *Dîners du Baron d'Holbach*. In this I shall insert three novels, which are completed, though not yet published. 3. I shall finish a little mythological poem, in prose, entitled *Idalie*, of which I have only given some fragments in my *Feuilles des Gens du Monde*, or *Imaginary Journal*.---(*Note by the Author.*)

A CRITICAL DIALOGUE,

ON THESE MEMOIRS,

BETWEEN

THE COUNTESS DE CHOISEUL

(FORMERLY PRINCESS OF BEAUFREMONT,)

AND

THE AUTHOR. *

Author.—At length I have finished my *Memoirs*.

Countess.—I congratulate you upon it: for I fancy that the greatest pleasures of an author is to write on his manuscript the words—*The End*.

Author.—You will promise us a far greater, when you write these words at the close of your poem of *Jeanne d'Arc*.

* This dialogue is not a fiction; I really held this conversation with Madame de Choiseul. Though I only report it from memory, I am sure that it is almost literal: I insert it here with the consent of Madame de Choiseul.—*(Note by the Author.)*

COUNTESS.—Let us return to your *Memoirs*; are you aware that in spite of their immense sale, the great world criticises many articles in them on the score of morals?

AUTHOR.—If such criticisms are well founded, I am certainly deeply afflicted about them.

COUNTESS.—Console yourself; they are in general very unjust: among them all, I can only find two on which I feel myself obliged to be silent; and if I am silent when you are *accused*, I join those who condemn you.

AUTHOR.—What then is the subject of these two critiques?

COUNTESS.—Here they are: you are reproached with having related an anecdote which, though pleasant, throws some mockery on the unfortunate Princess de Lamballe. . . .

AUTHOR.—Well—I reproach myself with that too . . . . .

COUNTESS.—Why then did you not suppress it?

AUTHOR.—Here is the way in which the thing occurred; I formerly used to write at the very

instant, or shortly afterwards, the detail of any thing which struck me: I commonly wrote these details in blank paper books, almost all of which I have lost, or on some small slips of paper, which I have kept. The incident to which you allude was written out in the latter manner; and I thoughtlessly sent the page to the printer. I read over the anecdote rapidly; and, from want of reflection, I was struck only with one thing, which was, that it perfectly painted the exaggeration, the absurdities, and the manners of the period: nevertheless I felt a sort of indistinct conviction that there was some necessity for a little vindication of myself for the insertion of the story: accordingly I added the *fact*—that I never had the honour of being the friend of that unfortunate princess. I was at Mantes at the time; and at such a distance from Paris, I was very glad to escape the trouble of having proofs sent to me: if I had seen the passage in question, I should certainly have retrenched the anecdote to which you object. Being sure of never having written any thing that was not perfectly true, I sent in the same way to the press

several other articles, which for want of time or thought, I did not read over, and of which I never corrected the proofs.

COUNTESS.—If such a horrible catastrophe had not ended the life of Madame la Princess de Lamballe, the article which concerns her in your *Memoirs* would only have been curious, and you would have been wrong to omit it; but after her terrible and tragic end, to cite a ridiculous and pleasant incident in her life . . . . . .

AUTHOR.—I wrote the anecdote in question long before the revolution.

COUNTESS.—But you have printed it.

AUTHOR.—I repeat that I have been wrong, and *very wrong* in doing so; but do not attribute a fault to my heart, which has been caused only by thoughtlessness, and the absence of mind to which you know I am subject, and which neither age nor experience has been able to correct. This error is the more incomprehensible, as I was at the time quite overwhelmed with grief at learning the deplorable event.

COUNTESS.—Your heart is so well formed to

feel for misfortune and to respect it! . . . . It must be allowed that a death like her's takes away the right of every one to criticise the unfortunate victim of such atrocities.

AUTHOR.—Yet it is not the less true that all great personages, when they have ceased to exist, belong to history, whatever death they may have died. All historians, even contemporary historians, have spoken, without offending any one, of the errors and faults of the unfortunate Charles, who perished on a scaffold; and they have spoken as freely of the beautiful and interesting Mary Stuart.

COUNTESS.—I allow that without this kind of impartiality it would be impossible to write history faithfully; but I have long observed that you are the object of peculiar severity, and if you look at this in its proper light, you will rather consider it a flattering eulogy than a subject of uneasiness.

AUTHOR.—In order to do this I must have an opinion of myself which I have done nothing to justify.

COUNTESS.—Let a friend be allowed to have a

more favourable opinion of you; but to prove to you the severity of which you are the object, I beg to remind you of the Memoirs of Madame de La Fayette.

AUTHOR.—I have read them, but I do not at all recollect their contents.

COUNTESS.—I have just been reperusing them, and I have brought the book with me: I have marked some passages; listen:

(She reads aloud.)

Madame de La Fayette was the intimate friend from infancy of Henrietta of England,* the first wife of Monsieur, brother of Louis XIV.; after the marriage of Henrietta, Madame de la Fayette, who was attached to her service, soon became her *confidente:* she then wrote the history of that princess, of which here are some specimens: she

* Henrietta of England was educated in France, at the Filles de Sainte-Marie, of which Mademoiselle de La Fayette (she who was beloved by Louis XIII.) was, since her profession as a nun, the superior; Madame de La Fayette, older by ten years than the princess, had married the brother of Mademoiselle de La Fayette, and going often to visit her sister-in-law, she frequently saw in the parlour the young princess, who became extremely attached to her.—*(Note by the Author.)*

says that Madame kept up an affair of gallantry with the *Comte de Guiche* . . . . .

AUTHOR.—What! she says such a thing! why, this is injuring her reputation.

COUNTESS.—Wait a little; you will soon hear plenty more. Monsieur forbids her to see the Comte de Guiche, whom he sends off to his regiment.

"Madame received him in secret to bid him adieu; after dinner, she pretended to wish to sleep; she then went into a gallery where the Count was waiting for her; he had entered by a concealed staircase, and he was first of all shut up in an oratory, from whence he passed into the gallery. Monsieur came in unexpectedly, and all that could be done was to hide the Comte de Guiche in a chimney, where he remained a long time without daring to come out; at length Montalais, (maid of honour to the princess and confident of the intrigue) took him out. All was discovered; and Montalais received orders to quit the princess's service immediately. She entreated the Maréchale Duplessis (through whom the order was commu-

nicated) to let her boxes be returned to her, because, if Monsieur saw them, Madame was undone. Monsieur consented to return them without knowing their contents.*

AUTHOR.—All this is frightful. . . . .

COUNTESS.—Listen, listen. . . .

"Madame promised Monsieur and the King, that she would break off all connection with the Comte de Guiche; Madame did not keep her word. Vardes, who was in love with Madame, was her confident. . . . .

"Vardes at last declared his passion for Madame, who did not absolutely reject him; it is difficult to be cruel to an agreeable confident, especially when the lover is absent. . . ."

AUTHOR.—That is a pretty maxim! All this is to me quite inconceivable.

COUNTESS.—Madame de La Fayette adds, that *Madame had naturally more inclination for Vardes than for the Comte de Guiche.* Besides she accuses Madame of many other things; and,

* A trait which Madame de La Fayette thinks *admirable.*—*(Note by the Author.)*

by a singular inconsistency, while she publishes all these details, she still continues to speak of her in terms of the greatest attachment.* Yet no one has in any way reproached Madame de La Fayette with having thrown out all this scandal about a charming princess, who honoured her with her confidence and friendship, and whose death was so tragical.†

* In this history, however, Monsieur is entirely vindicated, and upon good grounds, from the odious accusation of having poisoned Madame.—(*Note by the Author.*)

† We find in the complete works of Madame de La Fayette, a little letter which is not sufficiently known, containing matter which is piquant and innocent, useful and curious; as proving to us, that there existed in her time also manners of speaking extremely ridiculous, which probably this critique and others of the same author helped to correct, as they have not come down to our times. The following is the shortest of the letters in question; Madame de La Fayette supposes a jealous lover writing to his mistress:

" Ce sont de ces sortes de choses qu'on ne pardonne pas en mille ans, que le trait que vous me fîtes hier. Vous étiez belle comme un petit ange. Vous savez que je suis alerte sur le Comte de Dangeau, je vous l'avois dit de bonne foi; et cependant, vous me quittâtes franc et net pour le galoper: cela s'appelle rompre de couronne à couronne; c'est n'avoir aucun ménagement, et manquer à toutes sortes d'égards. Vous sentez que cette manière d'agir m'a tiré de grands rideaux. Vous avez oublié qu'il y a des choses dont je ne tâte jamais, et que je suis une espèce d'homme que l'on

AUTHOR.—I hope you don't compare with all this any thing which has escaped my pen relative to Madame de Lamballe.

COUNTESS.—On the contrary, in this comparison, I only wish to display the excess of severity against you, and the excess of indulgence manifested to others. I could quote, with reference to you, many other examples of this kind. However, I must always regret that the article in question should have appeared in Memoirs so voluminous; in which you generally have shown so much kindness of heart, and so much regard to persons and to reputations.

AUTHOR.—It is clear that I have refuted without any difficulty several calumnious imputations;

ne trouve pas aisément sur un certain pied. Sûrement ce n'est point mon caractère que d'être dupe et de donner dans le panneau tête baissée. Je me le tiens pour dit; j'entends le français. A la vérité, je ne ferai point de fracas; j'en userai fort honnêtement; je n'afficherai point; je ne donnerai rien au public; je retirerai mes troupes; mais comptez que vous n'avez point obligé un ingrat."—(*Note by the Author.*)

It is almost unnecessary to observe, that the letter quoted above, as it refers to peculiarities of expression *in French*, will not admit of being translated into English. (*Translator.*)

MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S

even when they have regarded my enemies; and I have never allowed myself to insert any scandalous anecdotes, though assuredly, in the course of more than sixty years, I might have collected a great number of such. But what is the second reproach which you have to make?

Countess.—Why, my dear friend, you have compared Bonaparte to Titus!

Author.—It would have been most absurd to have compared their life and character: I have only compared them in a single instance, which so far from being a eulogy on Napoleon, only shows the power which he enjoyed—a thing which no one can dispute.

Countess.—I am forced to allow that your reply is quite satisfactory; this must, then, pass for the only passage in your *Memoirs* which I have read carelessly.

Author.—I am well aware of the cause of such an inadvertence, which is remarkable in a person who like you reads generally with so much attention and advantage.

Countess.—What is that reason?

Author (smiling.)—It is because whatever seems to you (at the first glance) to be honourable to Napoleon, is somewhat disagreeable to you.

Countess.—And yet I am never unjust even to him.

Author.—I know it; but yet you sometimes want on this point a little reflection.

Countess.—I have still a little reproach to make, but it regards myself personally.

Author.—It will be the more distressing to me, if well grounded.

Countess.—I should have rather wished that you had altogether omitted certain pieces of verse written by me, which are printed in your *Memoirs*, than to have had them printed in such a mutilated state; among others, the pieces entitled, *Le Retour des Bourbons*, *Le Retour d'Espagne de monseigneur le duc d'Angoulême*, and the *Epître à Sa Majesté l'empereur de Russie*. If there is any merit in these poems, it is certainly quite impossible to judge of them from a few isolated lines; and I confess, there appears to me some warmth,

energy, and truth, in those which you have suppressed.

Author.—Nothing can be more true; and I myself admire these verses, which possess great beauty; and yet I was compelled to omit them in my *Memoirs* because they contained violent satires against Napoleon; that prince was my benefactor, the only one I ever met with among monarchs, and he was so of his own will, and without any solicitation on my part. I never asked any thing of him for myself; but I have obtained an infinite number of favours for others. After having acknowledged, like all Europe, his power, it would have been mean to attack him after he had lost it.

Countess.—I suspect you greatly exaggerate this pretended subject for gratitude: he gave pensions to all literary people—how then could he avoid granting one to you?

Author.—The *maximum* of these pensions was four thousand francs, and he gave me six thousand; besides, I enjoyed for nine years, under his government, a superb lodging.

Countess.—You repaid well all his favours when you were obliged to write to him every fortnight, and he refused to grant you permission to print the *Mémoires de Dangeau*.

Author.—Still for a long series of years I enjoyed his bounty; and the acceptance of it was sufficient to bind me to be grateful.

Countess.—I, who never owed him any thing, however, and who never had the least correspondence with him, even indirectly, had certainly a right to express my free opinion of him without disguise.

Author.—Undoubtedly, and every body will agree that you had; but what is most singular is, that in spite of the difference of our situations, and consequently of our proceedings on the point, I have always felt for our antique royal race all the attachment which a subject can feel. I proved this, even under the reign of Napoleon, as any one may be convinced of by reading *Mademoiselle de Clermont*, *Madame de la Vallière*, *Madame de Maintenon*, *Mademoiselle de Lafayette*, *un Trait de la Vie de Henri IV*. *le siége de la Rochelle*, *etc*. . . .

Countess.—And by your publishing, shortly after the return from Elba, the *Life of Henry IV.* without allowing a single cancel to be made, and though you had been forbidden during his reign to publish the work. My friendship for you made me greatly enjoy an action so laudable, so truly courageous as this.*

Author.—You may also, my friend, do me the justice of allowing, that I am an excellent royalist; to be sure I am not an *ultra*.

* I certainly had no intention to insert in this work any allusion reflecting upon Napoleon; but there are some *facts* still more disagreeable. As a historian I could not avoid speaking of Philip II. King of Spain, and drawing his portrait; and as a moralist, I was bound to terminate the sketch by critical reflections on the fatal consequences of the ambition of sovereigns, even when their ambition is crowned with success, at least for a time; and this I did. Nevertheless, I wished to publish this under the reign of Napoleon; for on reflecting on the success, even with him of my historical romances, I supposed he would not be offended with general reflections; but having received orders not to publish the work, I was sure that on his return from the island of Elba, and feeling, as he must have done, much resentment and ill humour, that he would be extremely hurt at the publication of the work; thus there was a great effort of courage required on my part to risk it.—(*Note by the Author.*)

Countess.—I need not defend you on that point, for nobody accuses you of the contrary. I can say with truth, that you will never be of the *Liberal* party, if there exists such a party, or if it should revive again; and that you will not even be of the party which is styled *anti-ministerial*.

Author.—No, certainly; for I have always found that no good citizen who reflects will ever attack them bitterly; because such declamations often repeated, may in some measure disturb the general security so necessary to every government.

Countess.—You would, then, wish that we should suffer every thing without complaining?

Author.—No; but I should wish that the first complaint should be made to the government itself, and that then, if the complaint, however well founded and equitable, be rejected, it should be rendered public: but without any mixture of bitterness and animosity, which can only be injurious to the effect of it.

Countess.—I do not allude to some other complaints made against your work, because they are absurd, and extremely puerile.

Author.—We are so critical in the present day! . . . . . .

Countess.—Yes; and so much so, that when we can find nothing to blame in what exists, we have a pretended foresight, of a morose and gloomy kind, which leads us to blame what *may* happen, and which in general never *does* happen. Bread is cheap, our useful and beneficent establishments are daily multiplying, charity was never more active; the conscription no longer tears our children from us; yet people repeat, gloomily, *this state of things cannot last*, and the disastrous forebodings of the discontented remain in all their melancholy force.

Author.—Nothing can prove this better than the singular commencemeut of a newspaper paragraph which I quote from a Journal of the Department of Gard; the article remains in my memory, and runs as follows:*

"We still enjoy tranquillity in our unfortunate department." It was impossible to deny that this

* *La Renommée*, Tuesday, 18th Jan. 1820.

unfortunate department, which was so completely tranquil, was *at the time* in a very happy state; but the writer *foresaw* that it would soon cease to be so. In this *prophetic* way of judging, no action will be found worthy of praise, nor will any situation of things be regarded as satisfactory.

Countess.—And what has not been said against the missionaries, whose labours have been so beneficial? At Marseilles they have been the means of obtaining a great number of restitutions, among others, in the houses of MM. Rey frères, M. Vintimille, M. Bergerac, and many others; at Mantes, they met with the same success, and their sermons, as they have every where done, produced many reconciliations among enemies. At Aix, they succeeded in appeasing violent quarrels, and prevented some duels; and at Dôle (Jura), they made their preaching very popular, re-established union in several families, and the spirit of charity among all classes.

Author.—As long as France has not a great number of curates, missions will not only be useful but necessary; these new apostles pursue their

holy career with the heroic courage of faith, and though blackened and calumniated by the enemies of religion, nothing can intimidate them, nothing rebut them, nothing excite their fears or their resentments; to them may be applied the fine sentiments of Bossuet: "The world hates you because you refuse to follow its works and to walk in its ways; you are hated gratuitously, but you are happy; you bear the character of Jesus Christ, and you may say, 'Come ye calumniators, that we may embrace ye! you imprint upon us that beautiful character of Jesus Christ, *I was hated of men, &c.*'"*

Countess.—As for you, my dear friend, console yourself for the injustice of the world by reflecting on the good your works have done, especially those on the subject of education: they have procured you a multitude of friends among all classes; to them you owe the lively and tender affection of all young people of both sexes and all countries, who have studious minds and right feelings. . . . . .

* Bossuet's *Sermon on Calumny*.

Author.—And your faithful friendship from your earliest childhood.

Countess.—It is true that from what I had heard of your works, I was passionately attached to you, even before I was capable of reading them; but the most brilliant recompense of your labours in this way is at the Palais Royal!

Author.—I feel it from the bottom of my heart.

Countess.—The beneficence, the goodness, the talents, the information, and the behaviour of their R. H. Monseigneur and Mademoiselle d'Orleans are assuredly the best eulogy of your writings on education.

Author.—I shall never desire any other.

I HAVE given a detail of the events of my life, and my opinions on religion and morals; I ought now, in order to complete this work, say something also of my literary opinions.

CHAPTER I.

ON COMPOSITION IN GENERAL.

INDEPENDENTLY of any religious sentiment, all men of letters, who are worthy of the name, unanimously agree in saying, that the greatest literary beauties of all kinds are contained in the sacred writings.

In fact, how many remarkable traits and striking comparisons we find in them! What grandeur and majestic simplicity in Genesis! What elevation and poetry in the Psalms of David, in Isaiah, and Habakkuk! What a mystery and beautiful disorder, what knowledge of the hnman heart, what profound and touching melancholy in the Book of Job! what nature and feeling in the

story of Ruth and Naomi! what admirable lessons of social life in Ecclesiasticus, &c. &c. Then, what profound thought there is in the gospels! how many ingenious apologues! What purity of principles; what divine charity; what a consistent and sublime morality! . . . . It was by a particular study of these sacred books, that the classic authors of the age of Louis XIV. rose to a rank of which all the revolutions of the globe and the *levelling* of our own day will never dispossess them.

The great Racine owed to the Scriptures, his finest inspirations in that *chef-d'œuvre* of the French stage, *Athalie;* and without the study of them Corneille would never have written *Polyeucte.* Racine has found in these inexhaustible sources, beautiful thoughts, which he has transplanted into profane subjects; among others, in the tragedy of *Phèdre,* the fine monologue:

> " Où fuir, où me cacher, dans la nuit infernale? etc."

—which is not in Euripides, but in the Psalms of David:

" Whither shall I fly, O Lord, from thy anger?

Behold, if I go to heaven thou art there; or into the depths of hell, thou art there! Even there shall thy hand hold me, &c."

I am the first author who has made this remark, which I have elsewhere quoted in detail.

Man owes science to his power of rendering an account of certain phenomena of nature; he has the faculty of discerning, of penetrating, of discovering; but not that of creating. When he supposes himself an inventor, he deceives himself; he does nothing but apply in a new manner a law of nature, or else he draws a new result from the same laws; he is in this case but a profound observer, or rather a fortunate imitator. Genius in man is only penetration; the creative genius belongs to God alone.

It is from the contemplation of the universe that all our ideas of the beautiful, even in literature, are derived; as are the laws which prescribe simplicity in our means, unity of plan, variety in the details, connection in the different parts, harmony, concord, majesty in the whole, and morality and usefulness for its end.

The whole of creation sprung from a single thought, which through its depth and vastness, gives rise to a multitude of others. God has poured over the universe the august and touching traces of his justice, love of his creatures, and supreme goodness. He has spread over the world far fewer evils than blessings; he has given us abundance of good, but has sown the evil sparingly, and always by its side he has placed a remedy or a compensation.*

The ancients (the Greeks) excelled in literature because they observed nature with far more care and attention than the moderns; they were not upon this head, as on many others, as well informed as we are, but it would be easy to prove that they were in this respect infinitely more ingenious and reflecting observers. For example, the moderns make the butterfly the symbol of inconstancy, because it changes from flower to flower; the Greeks made it the symbol

* See the developement of this idea in the *Dictionnaire des étiquettes, des mœurs, des usages*, &c. in an article called the *Spectacle de la nature*, a discourse on creation.—(*Note by the Author.*)

of the immortality of the soul, and for an admirable reason—that there is no image of it more natural or more striking. In fact, when the butterfly bursts from the chrysalis which inclosed it, it lets fall upon the earth its grosser parts, and unfolding its wings rises to heaven. This is certainly a most striking emblem of an immortal soul escaping from the terrestrial covering which conceals it. The ancients consecrated the rose to beauty, of which it is the image, and the myrtle to love—and why? because the latter plant will suffer no other plant near the ground which it occupies. You will find no plant among groves of myrtles, for the roots of the plant extend far, and will suffer no others to grow; the usurping myrtle *will* reign alone and exclusively. No tree could be better suited to the decoration of the altar of love. It was by means of this delicacy and depth of observation, that the ancients succeeded in representing with such truth whatever they wished to describe, and it was from the study of the spectacles offered them by the creation that they formed their immutable rules for painting, sculpture, and the drama.

CHAPTER II

SEQUEL TO THE PRECEDING.

While I admire in certain respects the superiority of the ancients in the arts and literature, I shall nevertheless repeat here what I have elsewhere said more in detail; * and this is, that very often, for want of reflecting sufficiently on their manners and prejudices, we suppose them to have had niceties of intention which they did not possess. The ancients carried superstition so far as to believe that there were certain words and phrases, the bare pronunciation of which would draw down ill fortune, and this idea led them often to give false epithets to things which they dreaded, and to which they gave flattering names by way of rendering them favourable. Those who embarked on the ocean which we call the *Black Sea* styled it the *Hospitable*, though it was dangerous. They

* In the *Annales de la Vertu.*

called the furies *Eumenides*, that is, *mild, beneficent, benevolent*. In the *Persæ* of Æschylus, when Atossa asks if Xerxes lives, she says, "Which of our chiefs are still alive? *Qui sont ceux de ces rois qu'il nous faut pleurer?*" This seems to be merely an effect of the superstition, rather than a delicate turn of sentiment. Lastly, it is through *euphémisme* that Phædra says to her confident: *C'est toi qui l'as nommé*. This speech, which we applaud without understanding it, is certainly only an *euphémisme*, that is to say, a superstitious terror, which prevents Phædra from pronouncing the name of Hippolytus.

The *philosophers* of the last century wanted two requisites for literature—knowledge of the living languages, and acquaintance with the customs of antiquity. Timanthes, a Greek painter, executed the famous picture of the *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, in which he represented Agamemnon with a veil over his face. Messieurs de Voltaire, Marmontel, and several other authors of the last century, have very ignorantly extolled this idea: they say there was infinite genius in the notion of covering the

face of Agamemnon; because, according to them, no art could have expressed the grief of the unfortunate father: but the real merit of an artist lies in overcoming a difficulty, not in evading one: and, among the Greeks, great artists always preferred those subjects which required the strongest and most pathetic expression: they have succeeded in representing with perfect truth the *Grief of Niobe*, who witnesses the destruction of her children; and the agonies, both physical and moral, of Laocoon and his sons in the twine of the serpents. All the eulogies accorded to the picture of Timanthes have proceeded from ignorance of the usages of antiquity: men, especially heroes, could not, without a feeling of shame, shed tears in public. When Ulysses, at the palace of Alcinous, melts at the recital of his own exploits, he turns away his head to conceal his emotion: and Timanthes, when he veiled the head of Agamemnon, meant to express nothing but this kind of feeling.

As to the knowledge of living languages, it is notorious that ignorance of them has led the authors in question into the strangest errors. Vol-

taire in his translation of Shakspeare's *Julius Cæsar,* makes Calpurnia always give the Emperor the title of *My Lord,* the meaning of which in the English is sufficiently clear: but Voltaire makes a thousand mocking jests on the *folly* of giving to a Roman a title of honour peculiar to England. M. de Marmontel, in speaking of the *Lusiad,* attributes to Camoëns all the ridiculous ideas that occur in the preface of the translator of that fine poem. I might cite many other instances of the same kind, but these appear to me sufficient for the illustration of my remark.

While we accord to the ancients what it is impossible to refuse them with justice, we must say, with the same feeling of equity, that great modern authors, Tasso, Milton, Shakspeare, Corneille, and Racine, have an immense superiority over them, on the most essential point, that of morality, which, good in all things, is necessary to the perfection of all works, even profane, even of poems and tragedies. The Gospel has not only purified national manners and character, but has perfected all the literature of modern Europe: the false reli-

gion of the ancients filled with errors and inconsistencies their logic, their philosophy, their most eloquent productions of every kind: their fearful system of fatalism did not allow them the use either of indignation or of admiration; their sole means of interest in their poems and in their tragedies were *terror* and *pity*; and the moderns to these have added a sentiment the most worthy of exalting the soul of man, and this is admiration.

M. Marmontel, after having praised in an exaggerated manner the literary merits of the ancients, attributes these merits chiefly to their mythology. He thus proceeds: "In short, a religion which spoke to the senses and animated all nature, of which even the mysteries were in themselves delicious pictures, of which the ceremonies were joyous fêtes or majestic spectacles, dogmas in which all that was most terrible, death and futurity, were embellished by the most brilliant emblems: in a word, a poetic religion of which poets were the oracles, and perhaps the inventors; these were the things which encircled epic poetry even from its cradle." In this singular paragraph there

are as many errors as words: this smiling mythology presents us with only two or three graceful ideas—the cestus of Venus, the Graces, and the Muses; but the fêtes of Bellona, whose priests struck down with whips all those whom they met as they ran through the streets: the orgies of Bacchus, the bacchanals, the indecent feasts of Flora, on which the sage Cato wrote a well founded and just satire; these were neither *majestic* nor *joyous:* the dogmas of that religion neither embellished *futurity* nor *death*; the Elysian Fields, of which all the happiness consisted in an eternal promenade; Tartarus, guarded by the horrible dog with three heads, inhabited by the Furies and the Fates, and presenting on all sides the most cruel and whimsical punishments: all these things are certainly not *delicious paintings*. It is true that every thing in the country recalled mythological recollections; but they were of the most terrific kind; they led to the thoughts of rivers of blood, of caverns inhabited by monsters, by three sisters who had among the three but one eye and one tooth, the beings who devoured children, the

Cyclops, the Centaurs, the Gorgons, the Giants, the crimes of Jupiter and the other gods, their rapes, their murders, the abominable histories of their demigods; which detail stories of carnage, incest, mutilations and cruelties of every description, &c. &c.; these are what M. Marmontel styles *delicious mysteries* and majestic and brilliant fêtes.

We ought to admire the ancient poets, for never having painted the exaltation of passion in the characters of those women whom they wished to render interesting: their good taste and observation taught them that a woman given up to *passion* is always vicious, and loses all the natural charm of her sex. Our own great masters, Corneille, and more particularly Racine, have made the same reflection. Pauline, in *Polyeucte*, loves Severus, but not with blind passion; the interesting heroines of Racine, *Monime, Iphigénie, Atalide, Andromaque, Aricie,* &c. preserve all the modesty and sweetness natural to their sex; all the impassioned women in these pieces, *Phèdre, Roxane, Hermione,* &c. are odious and criminal;

but in the actual decadence of our literature, the productions of a certain sect of authors present us with directly opposite examples. It is this very decadence which has produced what is styled the *genre romantique*.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE PRETENDED NEW STYLE ENTITLED ROMANTIC.

NOBODY has as yet been able to comprehend the definition of the romantic school,—a school which is said to have been the birth of the present century, and which is formed of two kinds of composition; the one distinguished by our modern littérateurs with the title of the *dreamy* or *melancholy style*, and the other with the name of the *ideal* and *terrible style*. 1. The dreamy style is not new: we find the most sublime model of it in the book of Job; and, in our own days, Young's meditations over the tomb of his daughter and on death, are grand and eloquent *reveries* *. To these we might add an infinite number of charming French elegies.

2. The *ideal* and *terrible* style is not a more clear denomination: first of all, the *ideal*, in lite-

* Not to mention the ingenious *Tombs of Hervey*.—(*Note by the Author.*)

rature, must be either false or fabulous: and as to the *terrible*, we find the most striking examples of this style in our modern tragedies, particularly in Shakspeare, Corneille, Crébillon, &c. What can be more terrible than that scene in *Atrée et Thieste*, in which the latter says to his brother, on receiving the cup of reconciliation:

"Barbare, c'est du sang que ta main me présente!"

Or the dénouement of Rodogune, in which Cleopatra wishes to poison her son, and afterwards to poison herself, in order to reach her rival?

Are we to understand by *romantique* a contempt for all the rules which have been left us by the ancients and by our own great masters? But Shakspeare and all the English authors, with the exception of Addison, in his tragedy of *Cato*, have constantly violated them, as their imitators the Germans have since done. It is thus evident that the authors of the present day, who engage in this absurd career, invent nothing, and only renew the monstrous irregularities and bad taste which have been despised by sound judges in every age.

Rules only were invented in order to render theatrical representations perfectly illusive—that is to say, to bear a very great resemblance to nature—a merit quite indispensable, which alone can give a genuine interest to such compositions.

The *romantiques* pretend that it is only in their writings that readers can find the *beau vague* which charms their imagination. The *vague* certainly charms us—for it is the infinite: we lose ourselves in it while we fancy we are only wandering through its labyrinths. The finest examples of the *vague* is to be found in the Scriptures, and in the imitations of those sacred books by our great poets, among others, in the fine verses by Jean-Baptiste Rousseau:

J'ai vu mes tristes journées, etc.

The vague is not a *kind* of writing; it can belong *episodically* to poetry, and then can only be tolerated in a few majestic or melancholy passages.

Is it then the general style of the romantic authors which constitutes this pretended new manner? It is now half a century since Diderot,

Helvétius, d'Alembert, Raynal, &c. introduced into our literature improprieties of expression, neologisms, false emphasis, and *galimatias*. Even a long time before, when our poetical language was not quite formed, a very middling poet, Saint-Amand, wrote a great many *romantic* verses —among others the following:

> " Tantôt délivré du tourment
> De ces illusions nocturnes,
> Je considère au firmament
> L'aspect des flambeaux taciturnes,
> Et voyant qu'en ces doux déserts
> Les orgueilleux tyrans des airs
> Ont apaisé leur insolence,
> J'écoute à demi transporté,
> Le bruit des ailes du silence
> Qui vole dans l'obscurité."

If the above verses were now to appear for the first time, they would certainly find a great number of admirers.

I wrote out more than forty years ago, some long extracts from all our old poets: this manuscript collection is now in the hands of my friend, the Countess of Choiseul, (formerly Princess de Bauffremont), and I have constantly remarked,

that in all the old poetry there was a great deal of obscurity and a tone of false emphasis. Such was the beginning of the art, and such is always its decay. As I have not inserted in my collection any verses, but those in which there was some meaning, I have not quoted those of Saint-Amand given above; I read them recently in the Gazette de France, and they are cited by the editor with this judicious reflection:

"It is curious to find that a style of writing which belonged to mediocrity, when our poetical language was hardly formed, should have become, in our days, the jargon of those who wish to deface an idiom now so perfect, and to falsify its genius, in spite of grammar, logic, taste, and common sense."

It appears to me, that nothing more sensible, or more clever than the above can be said on the subject; but we need not be surprised to find such an article in so excellent a journal.

CHAPTER IV.

SEQUEL OF THE PRECEDING.

I HAD finished the present article ten or twelve days, when I received a number for the 23d of April, 1825, of the journal entitled *Annales de la Litterature et des Arts*, in which I found an article, (by M. Briffaut) so perfect on the subject of the romantic school, that I must enrich this little treatise with it; and the rather, as this author has considered this subject in a moral point of view which I did not venture to touch, because I did not feel I had the talent. The article is composed under the ingenious form of a dialogue, between M. Fontanes and Lord Byron. The author discovers in this dialogue two kinds of talent, eminent in their way, and rarely united; criticism equally piquant, clever, and judicious, and an indignation worthy of the most virtuous, most energetic, and most eloquent of moralists. If the world still

cared about literature, this morceau would cause the most lively sensation; it is so fine that it is scarcely possible to make an extract; and it is too long to be given here at length; but I cannot help quoting at least a few verses of it.

Lord Byron first says:

" Vous voyez Thémistocle et Tyrtée à la fois:
Saluez en moi seul deux gloires réunies.

FONTANES.

" Vous semblez bien léger pour peser deux génies.
....
....
Vous le réformateur, de notre vieux parnasse!
Vous dont l'heureux génie a tout changé de face;
Et, d'un ulite nouveau, prêtre plein de ferveur,
Mis le crime à la mode et le vice en faveur!
Oh! que sous votre plume énergique et touchante,
L'adultère attendrit et l'homicide enchante!
Quel aimable intérêt inspirent vos brigands!
Vos plans sont, il est vrai, parfois extravagans;
Mais que n'embellit point le vernis romantique!
Chèz vous, le meurtrier est un mélancolique
Qui pleure sur le sort des malheureux humains,
Er fait du sentiment, un poignard dans les mains.
J'aime votre penseur dont la haute science
Méprise du vieux temps la sotte expèrience,
Demande compte à Dieu de tout ce qu'il a fait,
Blâme son monde informe et son ciel imparfait,

Les change, et dans l'oubli créant des lois plus sages,
Met l'œuvre des six jours qu'il réforme en six pages.
Grâce à vous, désormais tout est mieux arrangé.
Quel auteur, avant vous, bravant le préjugé,
Eût osé convertir, dans ses pages fleuries,
Les amours en bandits, les grâces en furies?
. . . .
. . . .
Votre muse, en marchant de sophisme suivie,
Ote à l'âme son guide et son but à la vie.
L'âme avec son auteur n'agit plus de concert:
La vie est un néant, le monde est un désert;
L'homme, ce roi du monde, égaré dans l'espace,
Sans que la main d'un frère à sa main s'entrelace,
Etranger à l'hymen, à la nature, au ciel,
Pour trône des débris, un tombeau pour autel,
Une lyre pour bien, pour spectacle le vide,
Seul, rêve, pleure, chante, et d'un long suicide,
Savourant à loisir le sombre volupté,
Repousse fièrement son immortalité.
Dans l'Europe éclairée ont couru vos préceptes.
Vous faites secte enfin, et vos nombreux adeptes,
De la mélancolie enseignant le bonheur,
D'attrister l'univers se disputent l'honneur.
Partout le chagrin gagne: on ne voit sur la terre
Que troubadours pleurant, dont le chant solitaire
Donne au plaisir proscrit un lugubre congé;
Et tout chante et tout pleure en ce siècle affligé.

LORD BYRON.

" C'est un bien qu'il me doit.

FONTANES.

" Ah! mylord, quel mérite!
Faire du genre humain le singe d'Héraclite,

Du monde un champ de pleurs, du génie un fléau,
De l'homme un automate, héritier d'un tombeau!
Daignerez-vous de Pope écouter l'humble élève?

LORD BYRON.

" Parlez.

FONTANES.

" J'aime qu'on pense, et non pas que l'on rêve.
J'aspire à voir le monde où Dieu nous plaça tous,
Peuplé d'êtres actifs, non de sauvages fous.
Je veux des citoyens, des époux, et des pères,
Instruits de leurs devoirs, veillant à leurs affaires,
Et rendant à l'état ce qu'ils tiennent de lui,
Non ces jurés pleureurs, ces professeurs d'ennui,
Ces amateurs de deuil dont la sombre manie,
Au sein des visions promène leur génie,
Malheureux sans malheur, tristes sans désespoir,
S'exilant au désert sans quitter leur boudoir.
. . . .
. . . ."

Lord Byron replies in an extremely brilliant manner, but in the tone of a misanthropic atheist, and the passage thus terminates :—

" J'ai visité la terre, où j'ai cherché des hommes;
Elle n'en porte plus: sur son aride sein
D'une race avortée erre l'ignoble essaim.
. . . .
. . . .
Plus d'amour, d'amitié, de grâces, de génie
C'est du monde expirant la stupide agonie.

FONTANES.

"Eh bien! il faut tenter, fût-il à son déclin,
Ou de guérir ses maux, ou d'adoucir sa fin.
Poëte, oubliez-vous votre saint ministère?
La lyre est dans vos mains pour consoler la terre.
Vous devez aux mortels, jusqu'à leur dernier jour,
Des leçcons de vertu, de concorde et d'amour.
Parlez: que diriez-vous d'un pilote en délire,
Qui, d'écueils en écueils, prêt à voir son navire,
Poussé par tous les vents, s'enfonçer dans les flots,
Loin de les diriger, riroit des matelots,
Et, glaçant leur espoir, en troublant leur courage,
Leur montreroit partout une mer sans rivage?"

It is with great regret that I suppress eighteen fine lines, and the reply of Lord Byron, as well as the last answer cf M. Fontanes, which is truly admirable.

Upon which Lord Byron exclaims:—

"Ah! je voix qu'entre nous il n'est point de traité!
Vous chantez le devoir et moi la liberté.
Vous courtisez encor, dans les formes prescrites,
Votre antique Apollon, vos muses décrépites.
Quittons-nous: mais tremblez! le classique est bien bas
Le monde est sous mes lois.

FONTANES.

"Il n'y restera pas."

Thus ends this inimitable dialogue; this brilliant and original production is quite in its place in a journal worthy of eulogy in all respects.

CHAPTER V.

ON GALIMATIAS.

FONTENELLE, the precursor of false philosophy, was not, as is commonly believed, the first modern author who brought *galimatias* into fashion; he is often affected, and the nicety of his thoughts is often too *recherchée*, yet what he says may always be understood: but towards the end of his life (for as every one knows he lived to one hundred) some authors of his time, seduced by the delicate turn of his mind, began to introduce into our literature what we style *galimatias*. Collé,* who was then very young, composed for the sake of a jest, a song quite void of sense: this was sung at Madame de Tencin's, (whom alone he let into the

* A propos of Collé, I have in my Memoirs made a strange mistake which has been judiciously corrected in the newspapers: I have attributed to him the drama of *Beverley*, which is by Saurin; and this is a mistake the more singular on my part, as in other places I have cited that piece with the real name of the author.—(*Note by the Author.*)

secret,) and his couplets were thought charming—they are as follow :—

Qu'il est heureux de se défendre,
Quand le cœur ne s'est pas rendu!
Mais qu'il est fâcheux de se rendre.
Quand le bonheur est suspendu ;
Souvent par un mal entendu
L'amant adroit se fait entendre.

This badinage had such an appearance of signifying something, that Fontenelle, on hearing it sung, fancied he understood it, and begged seriously that it should be recommenced, in order that he might catch the sense. Madame de Tencin interrupted the singer by telling Fontenelle that the couplet was only a *galimatias: it so much resembles*, replied Fontenelle, *all the verses which I hear read or sung here, that I am not surprised at my mistake.*

Fontenelle, as a poet, in spite of his niceness and delicacy, was but middling, because he had no sentiment of harmony either in prose or in verse ; it is to him that we owe the two ridiculous lines :—

" Nuit, Mort, Cerbère, Hécate, Erèbe, Averne,
Noires filles du Styx que la fureur gouverne."

The first line pronounced rather fast is absolutely unintelligible to the ear: and the same author has composed several in the same style, or nearly as bad.

His friend Lamothe, who is far too much neglected in our day, was greatly his superior in poetry. He has written odes in which the reader will admire several strophes of the greatest beauty. We may find fault with some expressions in his fables, but we do not render justice to a great number of them which are truly charming. The author of *Inès* must be always placed in the list of estimable *littérateurs* and poets.

We owe to our modern philosophers the revival of *galimatias;* I shall here cite an example from d'Alembert, which is the more singular, as it occurs in his *famous* Discours Preliminaire (to the *Encyclopédie*), so absurdly lauded. D'Alembert certainly did not understand his own meaning when he gave the following definition: "Architecture is to the true, only the embellished masque of one of our first wants."

We may further judge of the style of M.

d'Alembert by an important parallel in which he has mustered all his imagination and all his eloquence; it is as follows:—

"Would it not be easy to compare together the three great masters of our poetry,—Despréaux, Racine, and M. de Voltaire.* Might we not say to explain the differences which characterise them, that Despréaux can strike out and fabricate verses with great felicity; that Racine casts his in a kind of beautiful mould, which discovers the hand of the artist without leaving traces of it; that M. de Voltaire, whose verses seem to flow as from a spring, appears to speak, without art or study, a natural language? May we not observe, that in reading Despréaux, we end by feeling fatigued; that Racine leaves no impression, because, if on one

* It is singular to omit among our great poets the name of J. B. Rousseau; is it because he has not written tragedies? This cannot be, for Despréaux was not a dramatic author. Was it because Voltaire wrote to Madame du Chàtelet—*Rousseau is gone to Brussels to write bad odes!* Yet this very Rousseau still preserves the name of *Great*, and will always keep it. Voltaire also abused another poet of superior talent in various styles. Did he not style the author of the *Epître sur la convalescence, Vertvert, la Chartreuse, the Méchant?*—(*Note by the Author.*)

side, his constant facility removes the appearance of labour, on the other, the regular perfection of his style always recalls the idea of it to the reader; while in M. de Voltaire, the labour is never felt, because the most careless verses which at intervals escape from his pen, lead us to believe that the fine lines which have preceded or followed them, have cost the poet as little labour; lastly, may we not make, from the contemplation of the chefs-d'œuvre of the fine arts, a comparison between these three great writers? May we not say, that the manner of Despréaux, correct, firm, and nervous, is well represented by the fine statue of the Gladiator; that of Racine, as correct, but more polished and rounded, by the Venus di Medicis; and that of M. de Voltaire, easy, light, graceful, and noble, by the Apollo Belvedere?"

Was there ever a galimatias more singularly diffuse or more tiresome, expressions more ridiculous, or language more dissonant?

Does the writer allude to the Dying or the Fighting Gladiator? The two statues are equally fine. He ought not to have left us in this uncer-

tainty: but he had never been at Rome, and perhaps had never heard but of one Gladiator.

Of all the antique statues, the Apollo is the only one of which there does not exist a fine copy; the author had never seen but copies of these statues, therefore, supposing that he had any taste, it is clear that he here places Voltaire above Racine. It is, however, agreeable to learn that Racine's style is *rounded.*

In 1406, on the subject of the schism between the two popes, Benedict and Innocent, a celebrated orator of the day compared their dissensions to circles, semicircles, right lines, &c. This ridiculous introduction of scientific words into oratory was then very generally admired. The age of Louis XIV. however shows no traces of this bad taste.

But the philosophers of the eighteenth century brought the practice again into fashion. M. Diderot says, in speaking of theatrical illusion,—

"This kind of illusion depends on circumstances; but some circumstances render it more or less difficult of production. May I be allowed

for a moment to express myself in the language of geometricians? Every one knows what is called an equation. Illusion is on one side equal to a sum of terms of which some are positive, some negative, of which the number and combination may be indefinitely varied, but of which the total value is constantly the same; the positive terms represent ordinary circumstances, and the negative extraordinary circumstances,—and the one must be balanced by the other."

It is thus that M. Diderot expresses himself on the art of writing:

"We have a just idea of the thing—it is present to our memories; if we try to express it we fail. We combine the words of sharp and flat, quick and slow, sweet and strong; but the reed, which is too weak, will not bear us. . . . . A musician will catch the cry of nature when it comes forth violent and inarticulate; he will make it the basis of his melody; and upon the chords *of that melody* it is that he will make his thunder roll, &c. &c."

Absurdities of every kind have been exhausted by the modern philosophers and their disciples,

in morals, literature, and politics. But what is particularly disgraceful to them, is, that they were not led astray by their imaginations, for they have stolen all the extravagancies which they use in the old writers, whom the great authors of the age of Louis XIV. cast justly into contempt and oblivion; even the blasphemies and the impieties of Voltaire and his disciples, are not their own property. I have proved that the *Dictionary of Heresies*,* by Pluquet, furnished them with even these, and that their works do not contain a single opinion which has not been maintained by some heretic; and this no one can contradict. This proves too that the age of Louis XIV. was perfectly acquainted with all the anti-religious arguments which have appeared, and still appear even in our days of luminous novelty.

We cite with reason as something very absurd, a passage from B. Gratian, an old author, who says, that "the thoughts proceed from the vast coasts of the memory, embark on the sea of ima-

* See my work *on Religion*.

gination, arrive at the port of the spirit, and pass the custom-house of the understanding."

The same Gratian says, that a hero towards the end of his life, *devient souvent la parque de son immortalité.*

Such phrases are doubtless very ridiculous: but at least they may be understood, while our modern philosophers who revived this style of writing, have rendered it quite unintelligible.

Here is another *galimatias* from M. Diderot:

"The true method of philosophizing is to apply the understanding to the understanding, the understanding and experience to the senses, the senses to nature, nature to the investigation of instruments, and instruments to the discovery and perfection of the arts, which should then be thrown to the people to teach them respect for philosophy."

I do not know whether this is the *true method of philosophizing*: but it is certainly not the true method of reasoning with justness and clear ness.

The following is another passage from the same work:

"The animal is a system of organic molliculæ, which by the impulse of a sensation similar to an obtuse touch, which the creator of the machine has communicated to it, have combined and mingled together till each has found the spot the best suited to form its resting place."

We might multiply citations *ad infinitum* in the same taste from our philosophical writers.

The following curious verses, seem to have been written for the present moment, but they are in reality taken from the *Mercure*, for September, 1727 . . . .

A force de chercher quelque chose qui pique,
Du nouveau, du brillant, ou bien du grâcieux,
On donne dans l'obscur, le faux, le précieux ;
Et souvent l'orateur, plus souvent le poëte,
Dans son propre pays a besoin d'interprète
Qui puisse expliquer au lecteur
Ce qu'a voulu dire l' auteur.

CHAPTER VI

ON INCONSISTENCY.

The writers of whom I have spoken, to whom may be added, J. J. Rousseau, and Helvétius, have carried still farther absurdity and fallacy, and their writings present constantly a balance of the *pour* and the *contre* which are kept up in the same work; beautiful phrases and blasphemies on religion, excellent and abominable sentiments in the same volume; the authors alternately are good citizens and seditious ones, christians, deists, sceptics, and atheists. M. l'abbé Barruel, in his *Lettres Helvetiennes*, has made this curious comparison in citations scrupulously exact; and these citations form five large volumes! * . . . . They have carried inconsistency so far as to undervalue and to dishonour themselves, by praising and boasting of themselves in a style quite unexampled, and then destroying all their own eulogies

* And these are but a small sample of philosophical inconsistencies.—(*Note by the Author.*)

by the most singular avowals. Rousseau, in his *Confessions*, says plainly, and in direct terms, that he is the most virtuous and the best of men; though he confesses himself to have been a libertine and ungrateful; that he has committed a robbery of which he has thrown the blame upon an innocent person; that he has changed his religion through views of interest, and that he has placed all his children in a workhouse. Diderot and d'Alembert, in a thousand passages of their writings, cry up to the skies that great work, the *Encyclopédie*, and continually report that the undertaking will *immortalize the authors of it*: while in other pages of their works, they speak of it with a modesty which goes the length of humility. Diderot himself pronounces on it this judgment: "The *Encyclopédie* was a gulf into which a multitude threw *pêle-mêle* an infinity of things, erroneously looked at, ill-digested, good, bad, detestable, true, false, uncertain, and always incoherent, and disagreeing among themselves." Yet in the next sentence he declaims against all who dare to censure the *Encyclopédie*: M. de Vol-

taire, in his *Dictionnaire philosophique,* nobly styles those critics *Gadouards,** and d'Alembert, in his preface to the third volume of the *Encyclopédie,* after lavishing the most pompous eulogies on all his associates, modestly adds: "We believe we may apply to ourselves the saying of Cremutius Cordus: The world will not only think of *Brutus* and of *Cassius,* but also of us." This passage is very remarkable, though hitherto it has escaped the penetration of the critics. This Brutus leagued with Cassius, indicates the republican murderer of Cæsar. And Cremutius Cordus was a seditious *philosopher,* the whole of whose works were burnt publicly by order of the senate. . . . . The allusion is ingenious and extremely just . . . We are now about to offer some reflections on the various styles of writing.

* We dare not venture to translate this filthy word.---(*Translator.*)

CHAPTER VII.

ON STYLE IN GENERAL.

M. Marmontel has written a system of poetry in which there is a great deal of talent, but also many false and erroneous ideas; it has been lately reprinted in his *Mélanges*. A genuine and admirable *poetique* for the French language is, as I have already said, M. de Buffon's *Natural History*: it contains no precepts, but it presents the most perfect model of almost all the styles of composition. For example, what nobleness, and what majesty we find in the articles on the horse, on the lion, on the elephant, &c. What a sombre and terrible colouring in his description of the tiger, the leopard, and the kamichi! What delicacy and sweetness in the history of the dove: and what sensibility in that of the dog! In the history of the colibri, and even in that of the ass, what elegance and grace we find! As to versification, we have the *Art poetique* of Boileau.

The *cours de litterature* of M. de La Harpe is doubtless a very estimable course of poetry: but there is in it a partiality which frequently obscures his opinions, and exaggerates if it does not falsify them; they are generally in extremes, whether for good or for evil:* a good system of poetry yet remains to be written, and would be at least three volumes in octavo.

I do not here pretend to do more than to announce my literary opinions: consequently this sort of little treatise will be very brief: but I shall try in spite of its brevity to fill it with some ideas which will be new to young readers.†

In order to succeed in any style whatever, reflection and study are necessary, and the art of writing demands much of both. The indispensable qualities of a good style, are, clearness,

* He has greatly neglected in this work our *old* literature, of which he had but a very superficial notion, and which he carries only up to *Marot*.

† I have placed in this *résumé* several things taken from my *Dictionnaire des étiquettes,* etc. because in the new edition of this work, which is preparing, I wish to omit every thing relative to literature.—(*Notes by the Author.*)

a natural manner, purity, harmony, and elegance.

Clearness excludes all amphibological modes of expression, any thing confused or diffuse; when a writer is diffuse, he is generally obscure, because the attention of the reader is exhausted by his verbiage. Too great brevity may also, for want of necessary explanation, throw great obscurity over a work.

A natural style preserves an author from tumidity, from false emphasis, and from galimatias, which are always produced by ambitious pretensions. Purity of language is founded on a construction of simple and correct phrases, on a perfect acquaintance with the proper use of words, and a knowledge of the true force and meaning of every expression.

Harmony consists in pleasing the ear, in avoiding *hiatus*, all junctions of hard sounds, all repetitions of the same sound, or even of the same consonant :* prose rhymes, and blank verse, in

* As in this verse:

"Non, il n'est rien que Nanine n'honore."—(*Note by the Author.*)

general, every *final phrase,* or that which closes a paragraph, should be somewhat long; for almost always when that phrase wants *number,* the ear misses what it expects. The harmony, however, must be *varied,* and never confounded with monotony: that harmony which is intended to give a charm and a sweetness to the course of a work, should also change its character according to the way in which it is to be employed: it is the true colouring of style, and should be successively brilliant, sonorous, lively, and animated, or it should be slow and full of softness, and should represent to the ear, as much as may be possible, the image of the thought: even roughness may sometimes be a beauty, as in the following imitative verse:—

> Sa croupe, se recourbe en replis tortueux:

or in this one:—

> Pour qui sont ces serpens qui sifflent sur nos têtes?

Here the imitation is formed by the sound. Sometimes it is produced by the mere arrange-

ment of the words, as in this line and hemistich :—

> Tel on voit, dans les airs, d'une flèche cruelle
> L'oiseau timide atteint. . . . .

The interruption of the line, and the word *atteint*, placed thus abruptly at the close of the phrase, represents perfectly to the ear, the idea of the bird struck by an arrow. Harmony of style is of itself a sort of declamation independent of the inflexions of the voice ; so that every reader (provided he has a good pronunciation) seems always to read well, when he reads aloud without any tone, a book admirably written in point of style.

The poetical works of Racine, and J. B. Rousseau, and the prose writings of Fenelon, Massillon, and especially of Buffon, contain all the secrets of harmony ; and it is in these, that we must study them. See, for instance, in the works of the latter, among many other instances, the kamichi, a bird of prey of the desert, which is constantly hovering over vast marshes. Read aloud, without any inflection, this piece of writing,

and you will fancy you hear a kind of music, low, wild, melancholy, and mysterious, of which the illusion is truly admirable. In this morceau, there are neither traits of far-sought wit, nor brilliant thoughts; all its beauty is due to the *art of writing*, and it is sublime.

Elegance is composed of clearness, of a happy choice of expressions, of harmony, of periods, and of the union of nobleness and of grace.

CHAPTER VIII.

SEQUEL TO THE PRECEDING.

M. DE BUFFON said that *all the man was in the style*: this was going too far, for with an infinite number of particular defects, one may write admirably, without having these defects revealed in the style: but it is quite true that the heart and mind are displayed in the style. It is clear that one must think properly in order always to write well, and it is certain that in almost every thing, good taste and good morals are closely associated. Every thing which morality condemns wants the charm of good taste. A *tranchant* manner in youth, arrogance at any age, bitterness and contempt in discussing literary matters, grossness and indecency—are all things which are in very bad taste. True grace is due to the felicitous union of a thousand charming qualities: it gains all hearts, and has nothing frivolous about it: it is that

grace which embellishes the affability of princes and doubles the value of a benefit: it is the grace which in every action gives the tone and bearing which a person ought to maintain. This kind of grace is not to be acquired without goodness of heart, delicacy, and real sensibility. Observation of the world will teach us how to criticise it with acuteness: but we must feel, in order to paint noble or touching pictures. The impious, the hypocrite, and the wicked can never duly praise virtue: there mixes always in their eulogies something of falsehood, coldness, and excessive emphasis. In order to speak properly of virtue we must have tasted her charms: we must practice or regret it. Pride, through the extravagant pretensions it inspires, makes us fall into affectation and pedantry. To be always natural we must have a certain measure of modesty and simplicity. No one can ever with a frivolous mind, an ill judgment, or an unregulated fancy, be able to embrace or combine a vast plan, nor to class ideas in the order and with the connection which alone can give them the force they ought to possess: in

short, judgment is absolutely essential to good writing. Consequently, that art so far from being foreign to morality, draws from it all its perfection: and it is under this aspect that we ought to regard literature, and praise the taste of literary men. Therefore in order to cultivate our talents, we must first study to perfect our judgment, our disposition, and our sentiments. I may here seem to speak like a moralist, but I speak also *en littérateur*. If we follow any other road in the study of belles lettres, we may discover brilliancy of talent, and write fine sentences: but we shall infallibly be led into the most dangerous errors and the strangest contradictions, and never compose a work which shall be truly estimable, or consequently useful. A complete and good course of literature would be also a good course of morals. As to the different kinds of style, we know that heroic romances ought to present us with all the beauties of a pure and elegant diction: that history should be written with majestic simplicity; warmth, and all the more sudden movements of oratory would be misplaced in a histo-

rical work—because, in order to give the interest due to this kind of writing, the historian should always appear wise and moderate. He should be judicious and unimpassioned, sensible and profound, but never brilliant. I only speak here of a long and *detailed* history: but a *fragment* of history—or a large picture reduced—requires a different style. In the latter every thing should strike and astonish: gradations and shadings cannot enter into the plan: the writer should present nothing but large masses and bold traits: he should move towards his grand object with a sort of impetuosity. We have in our language fine models of this style and this kind of rapid narration. The finest of all is the *Discourse on Universal History* by Bossuet.

The sublime idea which forms the plan of this admirable discourse, gives it a character of grandeur, importance, and majesty which place it among those works which form a separate class in literature. How fine, how striking, and how moral is that picture in which blind Chance does nothing but where God prepares, conducts, and

regulates the whole! It is no longer a historian whom we follow, but an interpreter of Sovereign wisdom, who disdaining the attempt to penetrate the vain mysteries of men, or to paint their characters, looks upon them only as the instruments of God's supreme will, and who rising above mere *human* views, gives only a history of those revolutions of empires which enable him to follow the footsteps, and discover the profound designs of Providence. His tone is majestic, and seems so completely that of inspiration, that it appears to the reader as if the author could as easily have unveiled the future as retraced the past.

After noticing this chef-d'œuvre, we may cite the *History of the Revolution in Portugal* by the Abbé de Vertot. Every thing in this little work, prepares the way for its close, in a manner and with a rapidity which hurries on the reader: great sagacity assumes the place of strong thoughts: the author is brilliant by means of cleverness and penetration. The causes of events are there seen unveiled in a way which shows a perfect acquaintance with men and business. The cha-

racters which another writer would scarcely have sketched, are there finished. The author by preparing with admirable art the triumph of the house of Braganza, has contrived to throw upon the close of that history all the interest that can result from the most ingenious *denouement* of a dramatic piece.

I cannot help here congratulating myself on having contributed to the deserved reputation of the above work: every one said that the best work of the author was his *History of the Revolutions of Sweden:* but I ventured in several of my writings to oppose that opinion, praising at the same time, as it deserved, the *History of the Revolution in Portugal.* I have since had the pleasure of finding that my opinion is now generally adopted, and that no more is said of the romantic *History of the Revolutions of Sweden.*

We have also an excellent model of the *rapid style* in the sketch of the History of Carthage by the Vicomte de Châteaubriand.

CHAPTER IX.

ON ORATORICAL DISCOURSES.

We may style our academical discourses *oratorical.* If any thing is wanting to give them that character, it is assuredly not that air of *pretension* which the late M. Thomas carried to the last excess. With great merits and talents he spoiled oratory by his tumidity and *galimatias;* but it must be allowed, that in the latter point he has been infinitely surpassed by his admirers. D'Alembert, in wishing to imitate the acuteness of Fontenelle, has caricatured all his defects! That author frequently in his *Eloges,* speaks in the manner of Molière's *Précieuses.* Thomas took Bossuet for his model; but, even in his best pieces, how distant he is from the striking and majestic eloquence of the greatest of our orators. Composition is to Thomas a labour—the combining of a literary man's recollections: while with Bossuet it

is a sublime creation, alternately the result of profound meditation or happy inspiration. It would seem that writers who have not a natural style, should be far more regular and exact in their language than others; but to be exact is not to be pure, and when good taste and reason are continually violated, when strange expressions are sought for, the language is injured: we finish by neglecting the study of it, and fancy that negligence is laudable boldness. For these reasons, M. Thomas is not a good writer; we find often in his works specimens of incorrect language, which would not be overlooked in a schoolboy. The following is a curious example from his *Essai sur les Eloges;* he says, that he will make no remarks upon the *éloges* of Fontenelle, and adds, "If the public knows them, it belongs to the public to appreciate them; if it knows them not, *they are so already*."

It would be impossible to commit an error of expression more gross; but besides this fault, there is a curious model of argument exhibited in these two lines. According to this kind of reason-

ing, we should say nothing of any work whatever, for it must necessarily be either known or not known. Moreover, in the same pages, the author speaks at great length of those of Fontenelle, which were certainly *appreciated* already. It is in this same work of M. Thomas that Louis XIV. is described as having been *thrown out of the bounds of humanity;* an absurd phrase, which does not possess the merit of giving us even a confused idea of Louis XIV., for this prince was but too much *within the bounds of nature,* whether as lover, father,* or conqueror. Lastly, towards the close of the work, the writer gives us this character of D'Alembert:

"He possesses a precision of style which neither embellishes his ideas nor extends them; of which clearness forms the developement, and strength the only ornament."

This is mere *précieux* and galimatias; people laughed at it even thirty years ago; but a few years after, this very language, proceeding from

* When he wished his bastards to succeed to the throne.—*(Note by the Author.)*

the revolutionary tribunes, ravished people with admiration.

All the literary men who wrote in this style, and wished to acquire a great reputation, had good reason to deify Voltaire, in order to have his powerful protection. If M. de Voltaire, who detested false emphasis and galimatias, had not been their protector how he would have sneered and laughed at them!

M. Thomas by his talents, his success, and his faults of style, has done great injury to French literature; he has formed a bad school, which is so opposite to the genius of our language, and is so rapidly on the decline, that even the old may hope to see its extinction.

We ought, doubtless, to comprehend funeral orations among oratorical discourses. This branch of composition has been strangely profaned among us for the last twenty-five years: have we not even had a funeral oration for Danton—that is to say, *his eulogy since his death!* . . . . . We have a considerable number of very fine sermons by various preachers, but we have no funeral orations to com-

pare with those of Bossuet. There is immense difficulty in this kind of writing, which was not experienced by the heathen orators: this consists in knowing how to give the praises due to warriors, heroes, and kings, consistently with the inflexible austerity of Christian morals. This is a talent which combines all those of the art of oratory—tact, delicacy of perception, extent of judgment, steadiness of principles, and a conciliatory wisdom joined to strict truth; in short, the eloquence which attracts and persuades—that sublime art which will render the *Funeral Orations* of Bossuet everlasting models and *chefs d'œuvre*. M. Thomas, in his *Essai sur les Eloges*, says, that long after the death of Homer, his funeral oration was pronounced yearly at Smyrna, and that a Grecian philosopher happening once to arrive at the period, was entreated to deliver it; and that in order to prepare himself for the task, he proceeded, followed by the people, to the spot where the statue of Homer stood; that he held the figure for a long time in his arms, and then delivered a speech of great eloquence.

In ancient Rome the emperors, as well as our modern academicians, on mounting the throne pronounced an eulogy on the deceased monarch. Augustus pronounced the funeral oration of Cæsar —this prince was, it is said, very eloquent.* Tiberius delivered an eulogy on his father-in-law Augustus; and that on Tiberius was pronounced by Caligula. It would have been impossible to have selected an orator more worthy of the subject of his eulogy. Nero spoke the oration for Claudius; he extolled his *profound wisdom*, and excited the laughter of the Romans, in spite of the speaker's rank. Nero was the first who did not compose his own discourses; Seneca, the philosopher, composed them for him†; after him the emperors finding this method much the easiest adopted it.

Funeral orations were not known in France till the end of the fourteenth century. It is thought,

* He wrote verses, and had composed a poem on Sicily, and a tragedy entitled *Ajax*.—(*Note by the Author.*)

† This philosopher, who lauded the *profound wisdom* of the idiot Claudius, had written a furious satire against him called the *Apocoloquintosis*, or the Emperor Claudius changed to a pumpkin. —(*Note by the Author.*)

that the first Frenchman to whom that honour was paid was the celebrated Duguesclin. This funeral oration was pronounced in 1389, nine years after the death of the constable, by a bishop of Auxerre, in presence of the whole court, his text was:

Nominatus est usque ad extrema.

"His name is known to the ends of the earth."

The great work of evangelical preaching, *Sermons*, would require a separate article, but could not be composed by any one so well as by an ecclesiastic. I shall merely remark, that morality has never the force that it ought to have, but when it holds out an immense reward for the continual sacrifices it exacts; and when its precepts, equally ancient, and pure, and holy, are taught by an orator at once humble, and bold, and eloquent—specially charged with that respectable mission, whose whole life offers the most perfect models of all the virtues, and who, never trusting to himself, speaks only of our duties, and exhorts us to fulfil them in the name of the Divinity! Such are they

to whom appertain the genuine and sublime right of re-establishing morals and manners.

But what influence, in this way, can those philosophists reasonably expect to have who, equally inconsistent in their conduct and their speeches—giving out their own opinions as oracles—declaring arrogantly, that all who do not submit to them are fools—are proud, intriguing, vindictive, full of weaknesses and contradictions, and maintaining alternately the *pour* and the *contre!*

CHAPTER X.

ON THE DRAMATIC ART.

As to the drama, the following is I think what may be said on the subject: twenty-seven years have passed since the revolution; if we look into the same number of years before the revolution, we shall find the tragedy of *Tancrède; Iphigénie en Tauride*, by Guymond de Latouche; *Zelmire, Bayard*, and the *Siége de Calais*, by Dubelloy; *Warwick*, by M. de La Harpe; the *Hypermnestre*, of Lemière, *Guillaume Tell*, &c. &c. This latter piece met with great success when new, though very middling. A young author, full of warmth and talent (M. Pichald,) has just written one on the same subject, which has been accepted at the *Théatre Français:* I have heard some parts of it, which are of the greatest beauty. I especially admired the originality of the character of William Tell, which the author has contrived to render

equally touching and bold, by joining in Tell the love of justice and of liberty, the most humane natural sentiments, and rendering him always accessible to pity; this is quite a new character, for more or less ferocity has generally been mingled in the feelings of patriots; there is also an interesting originality in the character of Tell's wife. The same author has also written a tragedy called *Léonidas*,* which I have not read; but several excellent judges have assured me it is admirable; it has also been received at the Théatre Français.

Good comedies were more rare; but have we, since the revolution any piece more moral, better arranged, or more interesting, than the *Ecole des Pères* of M. Pieyre? a drama more national and agreeable than the *Partie de chasse d'Henri IV*? a piece of satire more pungent than *Le Barbier de Séville?* a comedy more witty or more brilliant than *l'Optimiste?* It is impossible to deny that the drama has prodigiously fallen off for the last

* Since writing the above *Léonidas* has been performed with great applause.—*(Note by the Author.)*

twenty-seven years; and it would not be difficult to discover the reasons.

First, during the first five or six years of the revolution, ferocity was essential to our tragedies; in this consisted what was then styled grandeur and energy. Then authors endeavoured to discover flattering allusions and flattering applications; consequently they were obliged to avoid carefully whatever might give room to *disagreeable* applications, whether in the choice of subjects, in the characters, or the development of sentiments; yet, in spite of all these precautions, pitiless censors signalized their zeal by mutilating, under pretexts always puerile and often laughable, the tragedies which were composed with so much care and prudence. The *vile slaves* who wrote in the reign of the *tyrant* Louis XIV. had none of these checks. Corneille and Racine wrote at their own inspiration. Then, some writers have composed for one actor, and in writing tragedies thought only of *a part:* it is not thus that good pieces are written.

However, I can cite in these times three trage-

dies which announce great talent. As to comedies, this age has been too active to observe; we have described ill, because we have remarked carelessly or have refused to observe at all. Besides, customs, manners, fashions, varying and changing ceaselessly with various governments, have given us pictures too fleeting to allow us to seize their features very faithfully. We may easily in a light and rapid sketch, fix the image of a shadow; but as for the shadow itself, destitute of colour, is it worth employing the hand of a great master to perpetuate the recollection of it?

In order to form general absurdities and peculiarities of manners, there must be long national habits. We have them not; ours are at once worn out and new, and we are undecided on the tone, the manners, or the forms which we ought to adopt. There is such a mixture in society that it is quite impossible to seize a single characteristic trait. Our good painters of manners may draw a few isolated portraits well, but in order to have those striking portraits in which every beholder at

once recognizes a likeness, we must wait. Time alone can thus restore us our best kind of comedy.

When a dramatic author wishes to write a piece for the display of *character*, it seems to me, that before occupying himself with the plan, he ought to examine whether the character he is about to place on the scene would be most striking, and offer the highest moral result by being represented in a burlesque manner, or by being placed in a noble situation, or in a pathetic drama. For example, the character of a *miser* would naturally furnish scenes far more comic than that of a misanthrope. As the character we wish to describe must of course be placed in those situations which best serve to display it, an *angry man* does not suit comedy; the character is fit only for tragedy, and has been exhibited in *Venceslas*, the *Duc de Foix*, &c. &c. The English *Gamester*, and its imitation by Saurin, are very middling pieces; but the idea of representing the fatal consequences of this vice was excellent and moral; it was necessary to treat the subject in this way, for the author's object

was to make the spectators shudder, not laugh at the victim of play. The character of the *Méchant* required a plot profoundly combined, and busy scenes, and these requisites are precisely the things in which this comedy, otherwise so charming, is deficient. Congreve has described an evil-minded man with far greater genius, in his piece entitled *The Double Dealer*. The catastrophe is bad, and the play is extremely licentious: but with certain changes, it would be easy, I think, to transfer the great beauties of the comedy to our stage. It is surprising that, in mentioning Congreve, none of our authors have ever imitated this piece, which is assuredly his *chef d'œuvre*.

All *low* characters should be banished from serious comedy: they appear there only absurd and disgusting. The character of the hypocrite could not be placed successfully any were but in comedy: for hypocrisy does not form the character of Voltaire's Mahomet: it is only one of the means which he employs; and the author might have called his piece *L'Ambitieux*. The *vain man* might be made the subject of a noble comedy:

we must figure to ourselves a great lord, insolent and disdainful in his manners; but whose pride was necessarily modified by the habit of living at court and by mingling in society, by which rules also the misanthrope is governed. We could not give the vain man any striking or gross features of the ridiculous: they should be drawn with delicacy and judgment, as Destouches has not done: his vain man is like nobody who ever existed: the comedy presents the singular instance of grace, interest, and merit, and in which nevertheless the principal character is a failure. After having determined whether the chief character is to be developed in a serious or comic manner, he ought to be placed in some embarrassing situation, which shall display it fully, by causing the person represented to feel all the pressure which circumstances can inflict on him: and in order to do this, the situation must be always in contrast with the character. It is thus that Molière places his *miser* in a situation which compels him to go to the expense of giving a grand entertainment: it is thus that he represents the *misanthrope* enamoured of a

woman who loves only company and dissipation. There are some characters which require intrigue—the wicked, the jealous, and the ambitious man. An English woman, of much talent, Mrs. Centlivre, has written a charming comedy of character and intrigue, called *The Busy Body*—a title which can only be rendered into French by the word *Affairé:* but in order perfectly to express the sense of the title of the English piece we must say—*l'Affairé officieux et brouillon.*

The more important characters, that is to say, those who are formed by a distinguishing vice or error, are not only exhausted in a literary point of view, but exist no longer in reality. Civilization, without destroying, mitigates and masks them: social manners soften their features: self love mingles with them other traits, and this mixture produces new characters: they preserve scarcely any *theatrical* points the defect is the same; but its obviously ridiculous features exist no longer. The good painters of manners in the present day have nothing left them but to show their delicacy and penetration: they can no longer expect to be

comic, to make us smile: in all Paris there does not remain a single *Harpagon*. All our Harpagons have now acquired the language of the world, and its manners: we could describe these by their actions, and nothing would be less comic. There were formerly misers as frank as that of Molière: and the character was then the more ridiculous in the eyes of the spectators, as love of money was by no means a general vice. We are therefore wrong in reproaching our authors with only making us laugh by means of buffoonery and caricature: what used to furnish genuine comedy is no longer to be found in society. There are no longer originals, therefore our absurdities no longer exist. I confess, that on making this remark, I by no means intend to pay a compliment to the present time. There has sprung up in our days a sort of piece very injurious to the dramatic art in general: this is what is called *pièces de circonstance*, that is to say, pieces which are first played at court, and afterwards at Paris, expressive of love for the sovereign, or celebrating fortunate public events. These pieces, which contain neither intrigue nor charac-

ters, cannot remain long on the stage, as their titles announce, and they are a useless waste of the time and talents of dramatic writers. It would be much better on such occasions to write as formerly, good plays, preceded by brief prologues, consisting of one or two scenes. At the fêtes of the court of *Louis le Grand,* people witnessed successively the first representations of the pieces of Racine, and Molière, and of the operas of Quinault. Such works were far more worthy of the royal fêtes than any *pieces de circonstance,* even the most flattering. The use of *prologues* has been adopted during the two last reigns; yet it was an author who seized or invented all the styles of flattery, as of satire, M. de Voltaire, the calumniator of kings, who invented *pièces de circonstance.* He wrote in honour of Louis XV. a drama, entitled *Trajan.* It was totally worthless, even in the opinion of the monarch himself. After the representation, M. de Voltaire opened the king's box, and addressing M. le Maréchal de Richelieu, said, loud enough to be overheard by the king: *Trajan est-il content?* [Is Trajan

pleased ?] The king, enraged at the liberty taken, checked the author by a severe look: and M. de Voltaire, entirely disconcerted, withdrew.* This incident did not contribute to render fashionable *pièces de circonstance*, which have only come into vogue since the revolution. Another thing, equally injurious to literature, good taste, and morals, is the great number of theatres. Before the revolution we had only the Comédie Française, the Opera, French and Italian, and the *Buffa*, and these were enough.

* The above anecdote is narrated in the *Cours de Littérature* of M. de la Harpe, who cannot be suspected of any malevolence towards M. de Voltaire.—(*Note by the Author.*)

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE ART OF PREPARATION IN DRAMATIC WORKS.

OFTEN a single thought, a single line, may account for the most extraordinary action or *dénouement;* if we strike out of *Rodogune* the single line repeated by Cléopâtre:

> Tombe sur moi le ciel, pourvu que je me venge!

The dénouement of the piece, cited so often as the finest on the stage, would be nothing but an improbable piece of atrocity.

Among the many unjust judgments with which M. de Voltaire is chargeable, in his Commentaries on the works of the great Corneille, one of the most shameful is the strange note upon the line quoted above:

> "Tombe sur moi le ciel, pourvu que je me venge!"

The author of *Zaïre* should, more than any other writer, have felt its beauty. If in the same way

we struck out of *Zaïre* the fine break in the line—

> Je ne suis point jaloux—si je l'étois jamais! ....

the murder of *Zaïre* would be only revolting.

There are two intolerable inconsistencies in the beautiful romance of *Clarissa*, by Richardson, which have given room to just objections; and this is the more to be regretted, as they give rise to the finest scenes in the novel: Richardson might easily have avoided the defects in question, by adding a few traits, at the commencement of the work, to the characters of Clarissa and Lovelace.

No author understood better than Racine the art of *preparation:* and it is in his immortal works that the art must be chiefly studied. But in order to employ judiciously that necessary art, it is indispensably necessary carefully to form the plan of a work, whether comedy, tragedy, romance, or novel, &c. which is but rarely done in the present day: this is the reason why so many works are destitute of truth: we must have made the necessary preparations in order to place them properly in the course of the work: they belong to a succession of ideas which absolutely demand a well

combined plan, and therefore an author ought to avoid all details which may contradict or oppose the preparations in question. By reading attentively all our good works of imagination, we shall easily initiate ourselves into all the secrets of an art, in general so much neglected though so indispensable.

CHAPTER XII.

ON TRAGEDY.

We shall now consider tragedy. Simplicity so much lauded in works of imagination is not of itself a beauty: for if it is not founded on some striking and original idea, and gives room for developements of the greatest interest, it would seem very insipid even if accompanied by a beautiful style: it would then appear only a want of imagination. The tragedy of *Berenice*, in spite of the charms of the style and the interest inspired by the principal character, is a cold piece, which has never been able to keep possession of the stage. Among all nations and in all ages, the dramatic art has always commenced by fictions of extreme simplicity. In the *Prometheus* of Æschylus which remains, we find neither invention, nor events, nor incidents. Though there is genius in the way in which the author has traced the proud and unyielding character of Prometheus, the piece

is not comparable to those of Sophocles and Euripides. The plays of the latter have only lived through so many ages because they join fancy to beauty of style and to truth of sentiment. For example, there are so many marvellous incidents, such bustle, so many discoveries, and *coups de théâtre* in Œdipus, that if the subject were not so completely exhausted, it would make the most beautiful and striking of melodramas. *Coups de théâtre* do not, therefore, render a piece less estimable, if they are ingeniously brought about, if the characters are well drawn, their sentiments well developed, and the style elegant and pure.

Héraclius and *Rodogune* are admirable pieces; though the action is excessively complicated, they are only the better adapted to the stage. It is singular that any one should say, that an interest so powerful as that excited by surprise and curiosity, should be banished from plays, poems, and romances. Why is the reading of the Henriade, notwithstanding the fine lines in it, so tiresome? because in it there is neither bustle, nor striking or extraordinary situations in that

poem. Doubtless the charm of style, elevation of sentiment, truth of character, and description, are, in a tragedy, beauties of the highest order; but the work is not as perfect as it might be until the author finds an original and interesting story, with great pomp of spectacle; besides it must be observed that the tragedies of the ancients were much shorter than ours. The acts of their tragedies in general consist of only two or three scenes of considerable length, and sometimes only of one. Thus in a smaller space they must have crowded more incidents. It is to be wished that dramatic authors in looking out for subjects, or in treating those they have chosen, should not be terrified by the apprehension that their pieces might be compared to melodramas; such a fear would repress or injure their talents; and soon we should only have tragedies destitute of all effect and imagination. Let our writers endeavour to write well, to be neither too emphatic nor vulgar, to draw grand characters, and to paint strongly the passions; but let them endeavour also to invent good *stage* fictions, and to present splendid

events—all these things united form the perfection of the dramatic art. Some think it wrong to introduce, or to paint, atrociously wicked characters in subjects of tragedy. To this I reply, that if in works of imagination only *interesting*, or at least excusable, criminals were introduced, such false delicacy would be equally injurious to morality and the drama. When crimes are presented to our view, they should be rendered monstrous and appalling. Besides we find in the most celebrated tragedies the most revolting characters—among others *Mahomet*, who only brings up children in order that they may destroy their father,—an atrocious deed which is done under the eyes of the audience: and Cleopatra in *Rodogune*, who kills one son, the most obedient of children, and wishes to poison the other. The *atrocity* of a crime is not a subject for criticism in a tragedy; but an inexcusable fault is to represent the commission of an atrocious action by a personage who has been painted as interesting during the first four acts of the play—for example, Fayel in *Gabrielle*, or Barnwell, in the piece of that name, by M. de la

Harpe. *Mahomet* and the Cleopatra of *Rodogune* commit atrocious crimes, but then they are represented as monsters; and the spectacle is equally moral and terrific. Another rule, which if not *written*, is at least consecrated by the custom of all the great masters, is, that terror should only act upon the mind; and, that consequently, it should present nothing which can act immediately upon the senses. This is the reason why the catastrophe of *Calas*, by M. Chénier, caused so much horror and indignation. A man must have reflected very little on the dramatic art, to bring upon the stage a man, whose limbs have been dislocated by the torture. I repeat that the great masters have never represented these *disgusting* atrocities. In the Greek Philoctetes, we see, it is true, a hero suffering from physical causes, but he wishes to hide his pain, and it is on the care which he is obliged to take to dissemble it, that all the interest of the piece turns.

Lamothe and many others have asserted that there is no tragedy of which the end is truly moral; there is one, however, which is moral from the

beginning to the end, and that is *Britannicus*. In that admirable tragedy all the characters are perfectly developed and sustained; and that of Agrippina is remarkable for its originality; along with all the traits which combine in a noble, and ambitious, and intriguing woman, with a multitude of details which a few words more would suffice to render comic, and the great truth of these details constitutes the nature of the character. Of the traits alluded to, I may quote her indulgence for Nero, when she fancies she is about to recover her credit, the manner in which she boasts of it, &c. None of the commentators has thoroughly felt the beauty of this part. It required all the art and taste of Racine to enable him to venture on introducing such a character into tragedy, with all its shades, of which some approach the ridiculous. This piece has the merit of presenting to youth some very bold and striking moral lessons. What is it that prepares, forms, and develops Nero? the most puerile pride, and his weakness in giving ear to the perfidious insinuations of a vile flatterer —is not this the story of all corrupted youth?

Racine has admirably represented a young man, who has nearly reached the lowest degree of corruption, merely because he prefers a complaisant subaltern to a sincere friend; he wishes to avoid being thought to be led by Bacchus, and he allows himself, in fact, to be led by Narcissus. What results from this weakness and absurd inconsistency? first, the removal of those whom he should have cherished and revered, and consequently ingratitude; and next, that ingratitude which augments with his disorders becomes atrocious hatred. He fears merited reproaches; and grown more feeble as he recedes from virtue, he refuses either to repair or to expiate his faults; he goes deeper into the abyss; and in the fifth Act, Nero himself, produces the horrible catastrophe. What sublime lessons are to be found in such a conception! ....

I might cite other tragedies, both foreign and national, highly moral both in their conduct and catastrophe; there is in particular one of Shakspeare's, which it is impossible to praise too highly in this respect—his Richard III., in which the ambitious usurper is painted in the deepest colours,

and in a style which not only inspires us with horror for his crimes and character, but a profound contempt for his extravagance. The catastrophe is admirable; when, after the battle of Bosworth Field, the usurper, who has lost the day, rushes alone on the stage, and wishing to fly, cries out "My kingdom for a horse!" This speech is quite sublime in the mouth of a man who has committed so many crimes for the sake of a throne. The fine scene of the ghosts between the two camps could not be represented on our stage, but it would be admirable at the opera, or in a melodrama. We ought not to claim for our own age the trifling honour of the invention of melodramas; they are nearly what were termed in the seventeenth century *tragédies à machines*, of which the great Corneille arranged the first. As in general there is neither truth nor developement of sentiments in these pieces, the style will be very soon out of fashion; but they are favourite spectacles with the people, and require all the *surveillance* of the police. They are pieces which may be made very useful, if they were made the constant vehicles of pure and irreproachable morality.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON ACTING, DECLAMATION, &c.

Acting in the grand style, that is to say, in Tragedy, is composed of two parts; declamation, which teaches the proper method of repeating verse; and acting, which is less susceptible of being taught, and which expresses the passions. By a singular consequence, in our day, declamation is almost entirely neglected in the new school of acting; though it is the only part of the art which can be taught; and the instructors devote themselves to forming the *acting* of their pupils, which nothing can give but natural talent and experience. The beauty of declamation consists in purity of pronunciation, the art of softening and modulating the voice, and giving the words a natural and just inflection. In general, the half of a tragic part requires nothing but fine declamation, the recital of facts, and the delivery of speeches; the

greater number of scenes require nothing but perfection in this department of the art. If the actor declaim badly, whatever be his talent in bold and passionate movements, he will only fill his part imperfectly; he must be but middling in the greater part of his character, and all the charms of fine poetry will be lost in his mouth. Besides, if he be a favourite actor, he will spoil the ear and taste of his admirers; he will be guilty of an attempt which no poët nor man of letters can excuse—he will despoil Racine of his divine harmony.

When people learn to sing, they begin by sol-fa-ing; the teacher, before attempting to give any charms to the singer of soul or expression, occupies himself solely with forming the organ of the voice, and securing justness of intonation. It seems to me that in the same way in acting, we should commence by teaching only declamation, by making the pupil repeat, not a *part*, but odes and detached pieces from our finest poems; when he could perfectly declaim the odes of Rousseau,

and the lines of the *Henriade*, the poems of M. Delille, &c. we should then give him a part.

No actors have ever declaimed better than Le Kain, Mademoiselle Clairon, and Monvel. The art of declamation has greatly declined during the last thirty years. Mademoiselle Vestris began to injure it by a vicious pronunciation, which almost all actors have since imitated. She added an *e* mute to the last syllable of all the masculine lines terminating in *r;* for example, she would have said—

> "J'ai cru sur mes projets, sur vous, sur mon *amou-re*,
> Devoir en Musulman vous parler sans *detou-re;*"

giving a great emphasis to the *re,* which she added. It is inconceivable that a pronunciation so absurd was not only not hissed by the public but that no one previous to the author of the present work ever criticised it, though all the actors have adopted it. It is now about fifty years since an actor, called *Aufrène,* appeared with great success in tragedy; he bethought himself of play-

ing tragic parts without declamation, and with the most familiar tones and gestures. From his practice, it resulted that he ruined the fine lines of Racine, Corneille, and Voltaire; that he injured the acting of the other players, who appeared ridiculously emphatic beside him, and that he spoiled the art. Those people who are always seduced by strange and novel common place, were enchanted with this new method, precisely because it was completely opposed to the genuine manner; and they fancied they replied victoriously to those who condemned it, by repeating that it was more *natural*—a thing which is incontestable; for it is clear that there are neither princesses, kings, nor heroes, who use precisely the kind of language which custom has consecrated to those personages when introduced upon the stage. But if we wish to see them in their pure reality, we should also make them speak in prose, or at all events, abolish the use of that high and divine poetry reserved for them alone, and henceforth write tragedy in the familiar verse hitherto devoted to comedy.

As there is something *ideal* in the language of tragedy, we should be able to discover it in all the other parts of acting, without this concord, even the illusion of tragedy would be destroyed. It is the harmony of the whole which produces illusion; it is nature embellished, but still human, like the Venus of Praxiteles; it is this *beau idéal* which, while it elevates the mind, strikes and seduces the imagination, and which renders a fine tragedy the *chef d'œuvre* of literary undertakings, and its representation the most ravishing and noble amusement which man has ever invented.

How much since the time of the ancient Greeks the art of declamation must have gained—what great steps it must have made to perfection! The expression of the face, the mute action, the softened inflections of the voice—all the qualities which require so much talent—existed not among actors who played in masks, and were constantly obliged to force their voices unnaturally in order to be heard; then the *men* who played the part of women—of young princesses!

We are indebted to the Comte de Lauragais

for the removal from our theatres of those balconies which so absurdly concealed the stage; to Mademoiselle Clairon we owe the perfection to which we are arrived in theatrical costume; she it was who suppressed hoops and gloves, and who assumed the true costume of the character. Till her time, no one, to the great scandal of antiquity, had ever worn on the stage any thing but the dress of the French court; our respect for our kings led us to believe that no costume could be more beautiful or majestic.

There is a part of the art of acting of which no one has ever spoken, and which nevertheless merits attention—the by-play of the actors; that kind of mute expression is often necessary, but it may be abused. For example, when Monime interrupts himself to say to Mithridate,—

> " Seigneur, vous changez de visage."

the speech would produce no effect if the physiognomy of Mithridate did not previously express his surprise and discontent; but the by-play of the actors should never abstract the attention of

the audience from any recital or detail of an important fact; for example, in that fine scene between Agrippina and Nero in Britannicus, the visage of Nero should express, in general, somewhat of harshness, disdain, and coldness; but if it varied in expression, it would withdraw our attention from the speech of Agrippina. I might lengthen these reflections—but in this place I merely propose to give some superficial hints, which, however, have the merit of being original.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON COMEDY.

In the year 3564 (of the world), Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes rendered the comedy styled *ancient*, very celebrated: among the Greeks this comedy supplied the place of satire.*

In 3680, Menander became the inventor of a new style of comedy. Justice was not rendered to him in his life time: the public preferred the pieces of Philemon, who was greatly inferior to him in his compositions.

Every one allows that our good comic authors, especially Molière, are infinitely superior to those of antiquity; there are no pieces of this kind which surpass the *Misanthrope*,† the *Avare*, the *Ecole des maris*, the *Femmes savantes*, the *Tartufe*,

* In it existing personages were exhibited under their real names.—(*Note by the Author.*)

† The characters, plan, and details of this comedy are all equally worthy of admiration.

&c.; the *Métromanie* of Piron, the *Méchant* of Gresset, the *Joueur* of Régnard, &c.

Since I have mentioned the Misanthrope, I may state that Timon the Misanthrope of the ancients has nothing in common with ours: their Timon is a gross and fierce boor who abuses all that approach him. The Misanthrope of Molière is a courtier who is continually tormented by the pressure of the rules of politeness and of society. There was great genius in placing him in a point of view in which an acute observer would find much to blame. The hero of the piece is interesting, because his disgust for human nature springs from a virtuous indignation against vice, intrigue, and falsehood: he is naturally given to find fault, which every one feels he must have been, even at college, and that the spirit of criticism is born with him, or at least, has displayed itself with the developement of his judgment: lastly, that nothing may be wanting to this grand picture, he is passionately enamoured of a coquette who loves scandal, company, and dissipation—who is trifling and full of levity. In the end, Alceste, who is

forced to renounce her, is punished for his inconsistency and his bitterness : which adds the finishing stroke to the perfection of this inimitable comedy.

M. Marmontel, in his *Mélanges*, says that the finest comic plot, and the only one which ever caused him a genuine surprise, is that of the *Tartufe.* I venture to pronounce this opinion very ill grounded, for the plan of the *Tartufe* and its catastrophe (the essential part of a plot) are the only parts which can justly be found fault with in that fine piece. Is it credible that a man who has married for the second time a virtuous and charming wife, and who has by his first marriage children who have never given him the slightest subject for displeasure, should disinherit them, and conceive a dislike for his wife, because he is seized with a foolish and ardent friendship for a hypocrite who induces him to make over to him his house and his estate, merely because *Tartufe* has presented him with holy water at church, and because he confesses that once he had killed a flea in a passion? . . . . . I acknowledge that much

talent is necessary in order to make us overlook such improbabilities: but though the *details* of this famous comedy are admirable, the *plot* is extremely defective.

Assuredly no one will quote among the number of our good dramatic works those which M. de Voltaire has written in this style, for example, *Charlot* or *la comtesse de Givry*, an absurd drama, with a divertisement; *le Droit du seigneur*, *le Dépositaire*, *l'Hôte et l'Hôtesse*, *la Princesse de Navarre*, *la Femme qui a raison*, *Trajan* or *le Temple de la gloire*, the first *pièce de circonstance* played at the theatre Français, a piece of flattery meant for Louis XV., but which equally displeased the prince and the public; *Samson*, *Pandore*, *Tanis*, and *Zélide*, the fête of *Bellebat*, &c. operas of which the worst writer of our day would blush to be the author. *Les Deux tonneaux* and *le Baron d'Otrante*, comic operas, are stupidities of the most inconceivable kind, when we recollect the name of the author. The Baron d'Otrante is a young nobleman of eighteen, who opens the piece by these beautiful verses :—

Je prétends qu'on me réjouisse,
Dès que j'ai le moindre désir;
Holà ! mes gens, qu'on m'avertisse
Si je puis avoir du plaisir !

When M. de Voltaire was not satirical, such in comedy was his *nature* and his gaiety; the rest of the piece perfectly corresponds with its opening. The following, when he is neither tragic nor licentious, is a specimen of his gallantry. The singer is speaking of a beautiful woman :—

Elle donne des lois
Aux bergers, aux rois,
A son choix.
Qui pourroit l'approcher
Sans chercher
Ce danger.
On meurt à ses yeux sans éspoir;
Ou meurt de ne les plus voir.

(Divertissement de *la Comtesse de Givri.*)

Again :—

Vous seule ornez ces lieux :
Des rois et des dieux
Le maître est dans vos yeux.*

* An agreeable inversion.

Ah ! si de votre cœur
Il était vainqueur,
Quel bonheur !
Tout parle en ce beau jour
D'amour,
Un roi brave et galant,
Charmant,
Partage avec vous
L'heureux pouvoir de régner sur nous.

(Divertissement de *la Comtesse de Givri.*)

M. de Voltaire has been very liberal in his lyric poems of this *harmonious* measure (lines of nine syllables), as in the chorus of *Tanis and Zelide*:

Demeurez, régnez sur nos rivages ;
Connoissez la paix et les beaux jours ;
La nature a mis dans nos bocages
Les vrais biens ignorés dans les cours.

It was not on this pattern that Racine and Quinault composed their choruses and lyrics: all those of M. de Voltaire, in this way, are on the same model. In his *Trajan*, or *Temple de la gloire*, a work of great pretension, is the following tirade :—

Tout rang, tout sexe, tout âge,
Doit aspirer au bonheur.*
Le printemps volage,
L'été plein d'ardeur,
L'automne plus sage,
Raison, badinage,
Retraite, grandeur.
Tout rang, tout sexe, tout âge
Doit aspirer au bonheur.

If J. B. Rousseau, M. de Pompignan, Gresset, and Piron, had composed such verses, and such pieces, how M. de Voltaire would have laughed at them, and with what good reason! Let us compare any of these lyrical productions with the *Devin du village;* yet the real talent of J. J. Rousseau did not lie in poetry.

As to the two only comedies of M. de Voltaire which are still played (*l'Enfant prodigue* et *Nanine,*) even his admirers agree that these pieces are infinitely beneath even the worst plays of Lachaussée and Destouches; the versification is very defective, and there are in them many lines quite ridiculous.

* It is not quite *a duty*, especially in the case of the happiness here alluded to; but the *thought* is incontestably true.—*(Note by the Author.)*

For instance, in the *Enfant prodigue*, a young and *innocent* person, well educated, and still unmarried, says, of a man and wife who do not love each other, that they are—

Sans joie à table, et la nuit sans amour!

In this piece too, there is the following line:—

Souffrir n'est rien, c'est tout que de déchoir.

The line wonld be far more correct if we changed it thus:—

Déchoir n'est rien, c'est tout que de souffrir.

The characters in this piece have neither truth nor probability to recommend them, and all the pleasantries in it are quite detestable. As for *Nanine*, the author owed the success of it only to his name, his cabals, and the talents of Mademoiselle Gaussin. All young and pretty actresses like the part of Nanine, because in it they appear successively in two costumes, one very brilliant, and the other quite *champêtre;* but the piece is nothing but a mere tissue of extravagancies. It is quite revolting to find Nanine who has been

brought up by the baroness, supplanting her benefactress, without experiencing any remorse, or even feeling the slightest scruple; and it is absurd to find a very coarse and vulgar gardener, who says, *j'allions:* and *je venions,* having the folly to demand in marriage a beautiful young lady, richly dressed and covered with jewels, who is admitted to sit at table with the master of the château. It is quite incomprehensible how the comte d'Olban, to whom the author meant to ascribe great elevation of mind, and a superior understanding, should pretend to justify himself in the eyes of the woman whom he deceives, and abandons, by telling her that the world is a fiction and that love has two quivers: and that afterwards he should charge his valet de chambre to proceed to purchase at Paris, for his marriage with Nanine, the finest gold and silver stuffs, the most beautiful jewels of L'empereur,* a superb carriage, six horses, &c. &c. This commission, to the amount of at least 2 or 300,000 francs, is executed with uncommon celerity: the valet de

* A celebrated jeweller of that day.

chambre returns in the space of half an hour, and announces that he has brought with him, all the magnificent purchases in question: that, lastly, this passionate lover, on merely reading an ambiguous note intended for him only (for the expressions employed by Nanine do not discover any love, but only the most profound respect,) that this love, I say, which *vanquishes prejudice*,* persuades itself that Nanine, in love with a peasant of the neighbouring village, sends him all the diamonds, adding, that she flatters herself he will *deign* to accept them. After reading this note, the Count d'Olban, in spite of the greatness of his soul, orders the object of a passion so exalted, to be stripped of her fine robes, and that Nanine should be made to resume her peasant-girl's dress, (which she has apparently kept by her carefully,) that she should be driven from the house, to a great distance, and left on the highway. The style too of this comedy, which is always loose, diffuse, filled with errors of language and false

* The second title of the piece is *le Préjugé vaincu*.---(*Note by the Author*.)

emphasis, in no one scene makes up for these revolting improbabilities; and to this is to be added the immorality of the subject, which represents reason and fidelity turned into ridicule, and the triumph of perjury and ingratitude.

I shall finish this article by a few reflections on the valets of our comedies.

The Crispins, the Frontins, and the Pasquins, who are always represented as very gay, and very rascally, in all our comedies, comic operas, and melodramas, can only have an injurious influence upon the morals of the people, especially when our places of public amusement are multiplied, and the price of admission, and the hours of performance, allow persons of all classes to go thither frequently.

The valets of our comedies which are copied from those of Plautus, are quite destitute of truth of character; but the originals of these persons really existed in antiquity. Slaves who had been purchased in infancy, and educated with the sons of their masters, acquired some of their accomplishments, joined to that acuteness and

suppleness which they derived from their state of weakness and dependance. They frequently became the confidents of their young masters, and tried to render themselves useful by serving them in their intrigues. Such was doubtless the true origin of all our soubrettes and Crispins; but it should be remarked, that among the ancients, these personages were not of such dangerous consequence as among us. Their valets were slaves, and the profound contempt felt generally for that class preserved the public from the temptation of imitating them.

CHAPTER XV.

ON HISTORY AND HISTORIANS.

THE seventeenth century, so fertile in great writers of other kinds, produced few historians. Bossuet re-opened with a prodigious and grand éclat that noble career; and as he preserved the first rank in it, he remained alone during half a century, as if the extent of his ideas and his plan, which embraced the whole universe—so much force, depth, and majesty, would have sufficed to illustrate, and succeeded in occupying for ever that vast field!

The eighteenth century proved rich in good historians—but of these the most estimable appeared during the first forty years of it. Our moral ideas were as yet uninjured; the sophists, who came afterwards so much in fashion, had not yet overturned literature and spoiled the public taste and judgment.

Quinctilian, speaking of the qualities necessary for a great orator, says,—"I should wish him to be such a person as that his qualities could belong only to an honest man." The same thing may be said of historians. What do they become when they are destitute of principle and truth? The wise, laborious, and accurate Rollin presented the public, and especially the younger branches of it, with a great and solid work of this kind, which will always do credit to French literature. M. de Voltaire has been just towards Rollin. In his Dictionary, and other writings, he praises his natural style. The Abbé de Vertot, the Abbé de Saint Réal, and the Abbé de Velly, have illustrated their names in the same career. A cynical philosophist aspired to more brilliant success, and obtained nothing but a disgraceful and fatal celebrity, of which all the éclat has now perished; I allude to the Abbé Raynal; his History of the Stadt-houderate is absurdly written, and his Philosophical History of the Indies presents, in a turgid style, descriptions unworthy of history, odious falsehoods, and monstrous errors. It is

remarkable how often the title of *philosophical* has been dishonoured by the works in this style which have made the greatest noise; for example, the *Philosophical Dictionary*. These works of necessity contained pernicious ideas; but I think their authors, out of respect for what they called philosophy, should have reserved the turpitudes they contain for their anonymous pamphlets.* The contempt for morals and decency constantly exhibited in the voluminous works bearing this title, is certainly a proof of an incomprehensible want of address on the part of such writers.

Every work which has not the tone it ought to possess, is deficient on the score of good taste; and this defect would of itself prevent M. de Voltaire from being placed in the rank of great historians. Besides the epigrammatic tone with which every body agrees in reproaching him, he violates constantly, in writing his histories, the

* Among other infamous articles in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, see the articles *Déjection, Ignorance, Passions;* and in the *Histoire Philosophique*, the details on the Bayadères, the sect of the Budoïstes, and many other morceaux.—(*Note by the Author.*)

most usual and generally observed rules of this kind of writing; for example, in his History of Charles XII. he quotes himself, not in a note, but in the body of the work; and interrupts the narrative to tell the reader what he has himself seen and heard in his early youth. But even if his style were as perfect in this respect, as it is otherwise, for its natural grace and luminousness, he would not the less merit exclusion from the list of our best historians; no writer has ever been guilty of errors so strange, or falsehoods more audacious and more multiplied; let us hear himself on this point: on sending to his friend Damilaville a portion of a manuscript history, he says,—

"We had agreed, in spite of the laws for writing history, to suppress the truth; cast your eye over the accompanying manuscript, and if you find in it any truth which should be omitted, have the goodness to point it out to me." (*Voltaire's Letters.*)

Upon this any remark would be useless—accordingly I shall not make any.

Another *philosopher*, but one who had a character full of honesty, and a deep respect for religion (M. Gaillard), was one of the best historians of this age. The *Histoire de Francois I.*, the *Rivalité de la France et de l'Angleterre*,* and the *Histoire de Charlemagne*, are all excellent works, in spite of a few errors in point of opinions and principles, this author possessed an excellent heart, great talent, understanding, and sagacity, and a very good style; he was equally laborious and accurate; his erudition was prodigious; and he possessed, in fact, all the qualities necessary to form a great historian. Some other writers, though very inferior to those I have named, have, nevertheless, also distinguished themselves in this style; among others, M. Desormeaux, who has given us a most interesting history of the great

* The philosophers never pardoned him for having said distinctly in that history that there was, undoubtedly, something miraculous in the life of *Jeanne d'Arc*. M. Gaillard has witnessed all the horrors of the revolution; his eyes were opened, and he threw himself into the arms of religion with all the sincerity of his noble character. He retired to Chantilly, where he died at the beginning of the present century.—*(Note by the Author.)*

Condé. Lastly, even at the present day we possess several historians, whose talents and principles are equally worthy of eulogy.

I shall say but one word on Historical Memoirs. The age of Louis XIV. has furnished us with several that are excellent; among others, the *Memoirs du Cardinal de Retz,* which are equally interesting for the facts they contain, and their merits as pieces of description and narrative. It is a pity that so much genuine talent, and so much knowledge of men and business, should have been debased by a turbulent and factious spirit. The Mémoires de Madame de Nemours prove their author to have possessed a sagacity which is very rarely found in women, and they display an impartiality still rarer, especially for a period of faction. I am proud of having redeemed from oblivion, more than thirty-six years ago, these excellent Memoirs; they entered into a course of historical reading, which I was at that time pursuing; I spoke of them with admiration in one of my works; there shortly appeared a reprint of them, and they became generally read.

Whoever is fond of literature will always experience a great pleasure in thus resuscitating a good work: I had the additional satisfaction of making known to the public an excellent foreign work, of whom no one had before made mention—for having read in English, six years after their publication in London, Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets,* I immediately spoke of them in my *Adèle et Théodore,* and in a few months there appeared a translation of the work into French.

The Mémoires de Gourville are very curious: those of Madame de Motteville are remarkable chiefly for their candour and the tone of sincerity which reign throughout them. As for the Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier, one would have desired that a princess of the blood should express herself with more elegance and purity; but such as they are, her Memoirs will always furnish useful materials for history. I might cite many other estimable collections of Memoirs belonging to this period.

It is to be remarked that manners have a striking influence upon this sort of works: Me-

moirs when good, are always written with good taste, or at least with decency. When religion, and consequently morals, fall into decay, Memoirs become cynical and genuine libels: those which remain belonging to the time of the Regency are proofs of this fact, and proofs of this kind are unfortunately multiplying daily.*

It would be an excellent idea to undertake the purification of history (and consequently of Historical Memoirs) from all the falsehoods which disgrace it. It would make a very voluminous work, and would justify an infinite number of personages who have been calumniated in history.

A man of great talent, who passed several years at Constantinople, and travelled in the Indies, and who is well acquainted with the Oriental languages, has written from the reading and from traditions which he has collected, a very interesting Memoir upon Alexander the Great, in which he has undertaken to prove that that hero never committed any of the crimes which history im-

* See the Mémoires de J. J. Rousseau, those of Madame d Epinay, &c. &c. &c.—(*Note by the Author.*)

putes to him. I shall only cite one trait from this Memoir, but which according to the system of the ingenious author, appears to me very forcible.

Alexander has generally been accused of having carried the delirium of pride so far as to wish that divine honours should be paid him: and all the historians have asserted that he caused himself to be publicly worshipped in Persia. The following is the way in which the Memoir justifies him on this point.

"This prince, in common with all conquerors who understood the human heart, was determined to respect the political constitutions of the countries which he had conquered with his arms. On arriving among a conquered people, he enquired what were the customs of the country, and at once adopted them, in a way which seemed as if he had done nothing out of the custom of his daily habits, and he exacted the same thing of his followers and his army. Now the universal custom in Persia was to salute the king, and even the princes of the blood, by kneeling: and Alexander, without demanding it, received naturally

from all the Persians a kind of salutation which was refused to him by several Greeks of his suite."

To this I may add that in ancient times the custom of the Eastern nations was to say by an exaggeration of compliment which passed into a habit, that they were going *to adore the king*, to express an intention *of paying court to him, rendering him homage*, &c. &c. It was merely the Eastern manner of speaking, to which was attached no idea of worship or idolatry, since it is found in the Bible put into the mouths of the holiest personages: and frequently the prophets employ it in quitting the levee of a king to whom they had been commanded to announce with the authority of God, his severe decrees.

It is well known that the Greeks were naturally inconstant and malignant. Those who followed Alexander were very soon wearied out with the campaigns they were forced to endure, and the fatigues of conquest: they wanted to return to their country and they revolted unceasingly. Alexander had more trouble in repressing their

tumults and putting down their revolts than in conquering the universe. On their return to their native country after the death of the hero, it was not surprising that these mutinous and discontented Greeks should fill their narratives of his life with falsehood and fable. When they said that in Persia Alexander was *adored*, that he was only accessible by the form of worshipping him upon bended knees, and that he had commanded the Greeks to observe the same form, they stated only actual facts, but they asserted a falsehood by accusing him of having exacted a worship of himself, because the demonstrations of respect and manners of speech in question were not idolatry. Alexander did not invent them, and in that instance as in others, he only conformed to the usages of the country in which he happened to be. Yet in spite of this, the traditions of the Greeks alone form his history, though all the Oriental books exculpate him on this point as well as on others. These books never speak of him but with love and veneration, and always give him the titles of *Benefactor* and *Father*. To have rendered himself thus beloved by van-

quished nations, would in some measure contribute to render conquest legitimate, if inflexible justice could ever approve of force.

How many other lies might be found in the pages of the profane historians of antiquity! But those of modern history are innumerable. A person of great reading and information, the late Mr. Crawford, assured me that his historical researches had positively convinced him that the Maréchal d'Ancre and his wife were altogether innocent of the crimes of which they were accused. Mr. Crawford intended to have written a book upon the subject, but was prevented from doing so by his illness and death.

One of our most faithful historians is M. Gaillard; and the writer who has, according to his own avowal, most violated truth, is M. de Voltaire. It is pleasant to find him compared by some authors to a monk. The illustrious author of the *Spirit of Laws* says that M. de Voltaire will never write history well, because, like certain monks, he only writes for his convent.* It is M. de Voltaire who has constantly asserted, that

* That is to say, for the philosophical faction.

the printed testament of the Cardinal de Richelieu was not genuine, though the Maréchal de Richelieu said, wrote, and repeated that the testament was perfectly authentic, since his family possessed the original of it. M. de Voltaire however constantly refused to retract his statement. It is the same M. de Voltaire who said in his *Philosophical Dictionary*, and in his *Age of Louis XIV.*, that at the death of Cromwell, the court of France wore mourning, and that the only person who did not, was Mademoiselle de Montpensier, *who had the courage to go into the queen's circle in a coloured dress*: though the Memoirs of Mademoiselle de Montpensier are in the hands of every body, in which she says expressly that at the death of Cromwell the French government did not undergo the humiliation of wearing mourning for that sanguinary usurper. Seeing that the court was already in mourning for another prince, and she adds these words: "Had this not been the case, I should have had the courage, I believe, to have absented myself this evening from going to the queen's circle." We may safely say that

the historian who has published falsehoods so gross, and so easy of detection, even without having any personal interest in doing so, has published many others when his passions and his enmities were to be gratified, and his systems to be supported. M. l'Abbé Guénée, in his excellent work, entitled, *Lettres de quelques Juifs à M. de Voltaire,* has pointed out a multitude of unheard-of falsehoods of that writer relative to the *Bible,* and an enormous quantity of false citations. All the historical works of M. de Voltaire are full of these: this is what he called, *immoler des vérités à l'utilité publique,* (immolating truth to public utility,) that is to say, to the propagation of impiety, and of the principles which lead to it. But of all the historical and literary falsehoods of M. de Voltaire and his friends, the most shameless and odious is that of which the Abbé de Caveirac was the object. Jean Novi de Caveirac, born at Nîmes in 1713, embraced the condition of ecclesiastic, and published many estimable works relative to theology, morals, and politics. One of the best of them bore the title

of, *L'accord parfait de la nature, de la raison, de la révélation, et de la politique.* The title of itself announces a conception of the most moral kind, and a plan the most extensive. If that work had had the reputation which it should have enjoyed, it would have served as a preservative against our modern systems of philosophy. M. de Voltaire and his followers felt this: and the genius of evil inspired them with the plan of their conduct on this occasion: the generation which was then decaying, knew and esteemed the work: the *philosophers* wrote for *youth,* and by means of their numerous *brochures,* fully occupied all their leisure hours. It was necessary to prevent them from reading the excellent work of the Abbé de Caveirac: to review it was somewhat difficult and hazardous, and besides, was a sure means of making it to be read. They took other means: calumnies and false accusations cost nothing to the chiefs of a party, nor even to their partisans.

Voltaire and his followers not daring to attack the work of the Abbé de Caveirac, resolved to bring the author into disgrace, and to render him

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an object of contempt and execration. The Abbé de Caveirac had formerly written a treatise, entitled, *Mémoire sur le mariage des Calvinistes*, at the end of which he had published a *Dissertation sur les journées de la Saint Barthélemy*. The title contained nothing which could excite curiosity: the pamphlet remained almost unknown and unread: the edition in the course of twelve or fifteen years was dispersed, and was not to be found in the bookseller's shops: the author died—and then Voltaire procured the work in order to travesty it, in a calumniating extract, with the most impudent and unblushing spirit of forgery. He wrote, and repeated in all his pamphlets, and caused it to be echoed by all his sect, that the Abbé de Caveirac was a *monster* who had written in that pamphlet *an infamous apology for the massacre of* Saint Bartholomew. This was believed—and the author and his works not only lost all credit, but fell into the most profound contempt in consequence of the assertions of so many united calumniators. What a triumph it was for the sect to have covered with ignominy a man full

of talent, who was pious, and who was moreover a priest, and to have plunged into oblivion a luminous work against philosophism! . . . . . . However time, which sooner or later discovers truth, led some men of letters to examine the work in question of the Abbé de Caveirac, (after the death of Voltaire,) and they found, with equal indignation and surprise, that all the declamations against the work were only so many atrocious calumnies. The sole object of the author of the pamphlet was to prove, (while he deplores with energy, the horror of the massacre,) that religion was only the pretence under which it was committed; that the crimes of those dreadful days were merely the fruits of a barbarous policy, and of private hate; and that, finally, there were fewer persons killed during the frightful massacre than was generally imagined. The following is the way in which the author expresses himself on the subject:

"Removed by two centuries from the period of the awful event, we may speak of it, not without horror, but without partiality. We may throw

some light upon its motives and its tragical consequences, without being either the tacit approvers of the one, or the unfeeling contemplators of the other; and even if we should remove from the massacre of Saint Bartholomew three-fourths of its frightful excesses, there would still remain enough of horrors to render it detested by all those in whose bosoms every sentiment of humanity is not altogether extinct."

Let us add to this, that the philosophers have never alluded to the *real apology* for the Saint Bartholomew massacre, written by Naudé, in his book entitled *Des Coups de l'Etat*, in which he praises the massacre as an act of the highest political wisdom, only blaming one thing in it, which is that *all* the Calvinists were not exterminated, without even sparing one. The work of Naudé made a noise, and was well known; and yet Voltaire and his friends kept the most profound silence about it. Why? Naudé was an impious and seditious person, and was in his writings the precursor of the modern philosophy.

The whole of the philosophical sect agreed in

lying with the same impudence, both in their libels and in their historical works:* their chief recommended unceasingly the practice to them: *non pas timidement* (to use the words of Voltaire,) *non pas pour un temps, mais hardiment et toujours. . . . . . Mentez, mes amis, mentez, je vous le rendrai dans l'occasion.*† (Not timidly, nor for a time, but boldly and always. . . . . . Lie, my friends, lie; I will do as much for you another time.) It was the unheard-of falsehoods contained in a libel of Voltaire's against M. de la Baumelle, that drew down on M. de Voltaire the following energetic and overwhelming reply:

"I am disgusting, you say, in the eyes of the public; what place, then, do you hold in its opinion? What is to the devout the author of *La Pucelle?* to Christians, the author of the *Sermons des Cinquante?* to kings, the author of those ever odious words: *Il n'est qu'un Dieu et qu'un roi?*‡

* When even the friends of Voltaire reproached him with this, and represented to him that it was shameful to write *history* on this plan, he replied that the French did not want histories, but *historiettes*—(*Note by the Author.*)

† Letter to Thiriot, 21st October, 1736.

‡ The King of Prussia.

(There is but one God and one king.) To that king what is the author of his life?* To all generous minds, the implacable enemy of Desfontaines and Jean-Baptiste Rousseau?† to all lovers of truth, what is the unfaithful compiler of the universal history? to all upright and honest men, what is the envious hater of Maupertius, Montesquieu, and Crébillon? to all nations, the man who has abused them all? to booksellers, the author against whom all booksellers lift up their voices?" If the author of that letter had written it fifteen or twenty years later, what fresh and bitter reflections he might have made! . . . . . At the period of 1753, when Beaumelle wrote these letters, Voltaire had not yet written his worst works against religion—such as his *Philosophical Dictionary*, his *Philosophy of History*, &c. nor his *Commentaries on Corneille*, in which he discovers his envy with so little address.

Let us admire in trembling that providence

* The *Vie privée du roi de Prusse*, by Voltaire, is a genuine libel.

† And afterwards of Fréron and many others.—(*Note by the Author.*)

which has dishonoured so signally this frightful system of philosophism, which put into action and made triumph by means of terror its maxims, its principles, and its impiety, and which has proved to us, that of all the errors that tend to lead astray the human mind, there is none which can ever so completely overthrow all ideas of morality, or be productive of scenes so bloody and of catastrophes and crimes more execrable, more terrible, or more fatal.

My *Souvenirs*, which are principally composed of anecdotes, are a kind of shreds of history, or at least fragments, which will always furnish materials of some description to historical writers. It is to the age of Louis XIV. that we owe our most perfect models in all styles of writing, even in the lightest and most frivolous kind. In our days there have appeared many books of *souvenirs*, but none more agreeable have ever been published than those of Madame de Caylus.

Travellers are also historians, and they are frequently more useful ones than those of whom I have spoken. That a man should tear himself from the

bosom of his family and his country to seek new information elsewhere, with which to enrich his native land and its arts, is a proof of the most laudable sentiments and the noblest taste. It is to be remarked, that immediately before the revolution, the most celebrated voyages and travels, and the most important and most perilous, were undertaken only by persons belonging to one of the classes proscribed in France—the *noblesse*.*

The illustrious traveller, whose entire possessions were one day to be confiscated, M. le comte de Choiseul, pursuing the course of his peaceful conquests over antiquity, discovered many monuments which had been forgotten and neglected for centuries; he went over the plains of Phrygia, and finding the tomb of Patroclus and the ruins of Troy, he designed them with all the perfection of an able artist, and described them with the united talents of a savant and an eloquent littérateur; thus self-appropriating, as it were, these grand ruins of fortune and of glory! . . . . . Yet, but a

* MM. de Choiseul, de la Peyrouse, de Châteaubriant, de Forbin.—(*Note by the Author.*)

short time after, at Paris, the revolutionary tribunes re-echoed to the declamations on the ignorance and the incapacity of the nobles.

The manner of writing voyages and travels has greatly suffered from the effects of revolutions. Towards the end of the reign of Louis XIII. and under that of Louis XIV. persons of rank, in general, never left their native country but to join the army or to be ambassadors, and when by chance they travelled, it was merely to inform themselves of the manners, the laws, and the government of foreign nations. Voyages and travels only formed, among this class, statesmen and honest men. They did not follow courses of chemistry, or natural philosophy, or botany, or natural history; and they knew very little of the fine arts. In France, at this time, the missionaries, the savans, and merchants, were the only persons who undertook long voyages: these personages were very well informed; but they did not at all aspire to the honours of passing for good writers; they thonght that in order to write a good work in this style, it was sufficient for them to have passed

enough of time in foreign countries to enable them to know them well;* the next requisite was to write correctly and with clearness; and lastly, to give a just and precise idea of what they had seen. There has resulted from this way of thinking a number of works in which botanists, naturalists, and natural philosophers have discovered some errors; but which, in other respects, are remarkable for the solidity of their contents, and the great extent of information they convey. Their authors have seen every thing, and seen all properly, because they observed without having any system, and they remained in the country all the time that was requisite to enable them to inform themselves fully about it. A person who only passes quickly over a foreign country is sure to bring back with him a great number of erroneous opinions concerning it. All those who have long

* It was thus that Chardin, who travelled forty years, thought; Tavernier, Niehbur, and others who did not think that one journey through the East qualified a writer for describing it. Tavernier made three journies through Persia, each of which was a long one. Tournefort passed two years in Greece, &c.—*(Note by the Author.)*

inhabited a foreign country will admit, that they never preserved at the end of two or three years the same opinion of it which they conceived in the first two or three months; and this, not merely as far as regards its laws, the manners of its inhabitants, or the national character, but in things relative even to its physical appearance.

The most solid judgment, even if quite exempt from prejudice, always carries into a new country opinions already formed; and these opinions have a prodigious influence upon the first impressions; besides, the personal reception one meets with, the people whom one meets, and the adventures in which one mingles—the ennui or the agreeableness of the journey—have also a great influence on our manner of judging. A person, whose health is liable to be injured by travelling, accuses the climate of being the cause, though perhaps it has no share in it. Let the same traveller remain a long time in the country, and let his health and strength return, and we shall find him erase from his journal the satire on the climate, and write in

its place its praises; it is thus with a thousand things, and almost with all. Should we not think it absurd in any young man who on quitting a profound solitude, should immediately after his first introduction to society set about the composition of a work on the manners and customs of the great world and of his country? yet he would be perfectly acquainted with the language, an advantage which is wanting to almost all travellers, even in Europe, and of which those are altogether deprived who travel in other parts of the world. Modern travellers, who are very different from ancient ones, in general pretend to be at once great writers, profound thinkers, and botanists, naturalists, chemists, natural philosophers, distinguished connoisseurs in the fine arts, and philanthropists endowed with the most exalted sensibility. This is much—and in this great number there are some things hurtful: enthusiasm and passion are worth nothing in a traveller—passion always judges ill, enthusiasm declaims and does not reason. This is the reason of our finding in

travels so many fragments of odes and hymns in prose, and so few pages in which there is common sense or information.

We have also to reproach the greater part of our travellers, with the spirit of system, and the rage for judging by induction; and more particularly with the habit of continually presenting us with piquant contrasts and striking oppositions, which joined to the excessive desire of being eloquent, produces false emphasis and affectation, and leads them but too often to disfigure facts, to trace characters almost imaginary, and even to narrate anecdotes, which only appear in order to support certain notions, or furnish subjects for eloquent tirades. In this way the traveller, who is himself confused by the constant effort to describe what he only fancies he has seen, carries us along with him into what may truly be called unknown countries. Instead of calmly observing, and fatiguing his imagination less than his sagacity, he ceases to be a historian in order to become a creator, and presents us with a work which might be styled a romance or a poem, if there was only more unity

of interest, and appearance of truth in it. It must be allowed, however, that we possess (though the number is but small) some excellent modern travels, which join to beauty and grace of style all the solidity of the ancient ones.* No work, of whatever description it may be, can be truly good, without the recommendation of a pure and elegant style. Let us hope, that for the future, writers of this class will preserve a wise medium between dryness and false emphasis; and that, without giving themselves up in every page to *extasies* and *ravishments* on the summits of mountains; to *religious horrors* in antique forests: to *melancholy reveries* on the borders of lakes; or to passionate and poetical raptures at the sight of rocks and cascades; that they will not display the icy coldness and *impassibility* of our ancient travellers, and that they will end by being convinced that the most precious qualities in a traveller are clearness, simplicity, reason, accuracy, and good faith.

* For example the work of M. le comte de Choiseul, those of M. le baron de Humboldt, l'*Itinéraire* of M. le vicomte de Châteaubriand, &c.—(*Note by the Author.*)

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF POETRY IN GENERAL.

We have no finer lyrical poems than those of Quinault, (chefs d'œuvre in this way), of Lamothe, of Bernard, and of Danchet. In one of the operas of the latter *(les Danaides)*, there is a scene truly sublime, which is entirely the invention of the author; Hypermnestre has just, by an irrevocable vow, united her destiny to that of Lincée; the altar of Hymen is on the stage; after the ceremony, Hypermnestre remains alone, waiting for Danaüs, her father, who is to reveal to her an important secret. Danaüs enters and commences by informing his daughter, that his safety and his life depend upon what he is about to demand of her. He then tells her that before disclosing to her the mystery, he exacts of her an oath to execute his commands; on hearing these words, Hypermnestre inspired by the purest filial sentiment, rushes to-

wards the altar of Hymen, where she has just pledged her faith to her lover, and pronounces with equal impetuosity and energy the mysterious vow exacted by her father; and this vow is to immolate the husband whom she adores! This is doubtless a conception of the newest and most tragic kind, and which, even in a tragedy, would produce a grand effect.

The lyric poetry of Racine, and the chorusses of Athalie in Esther, are also perfect models in this style, in which M. de Voltaire could never rise even to the second rank; and yet it would seem that it was much easier to write an opera than tragedies, seeing that the latter kind of poem is not subjected to the severities of the three unities, of place, time, and action, and that it admits all kinds of subjects whether taken from fable or fairy legends; but it also requires great facility of versification in all the different measures of verse, and the constant habit of writing alexandrines has often deprived of that facility some very great poets, among others M. de Voltaire and the illustrious author of the translation into verse of the

Georgics. M. de Voltaire has always, as every one knows, failed in that description of the ode which particularly demands facility and harmony in the fabrication both of long and short lines, and finally great elevation of mind and a genuine enthusiasm. After the odes of the great Rousseau, the best we have are those of M. le Franc de Pompignan; I may also cite with eulogy some strophes of Lamothe, and several entire odes composed by authors of our own day.

As to epic poems, I have not spoken of them, because I cannot cite as models in this way any thing but antique poems, or such as are written in foreign languages; but we may soon look for two which are to appear,—I mean *Philippe Auguste* and *Jeanne d'Arc;* these two works will complete our national literary glory. The talents of which M. Perceval de Grand-Maison has already given such proofs lead us to look with a just and lively impatience for his poem of *Philippe Auguste.* I have already mentioned several times *Joan of Arc,* a fine subject which has been so unworthily profaned, and which a religious royalist, and French lady, has so appropriately chosen.

CHAPTER XVII.

SEQUEL TO THE PRECEDING.

Besides the fables of the inimitable La Fontaine, we have a great number of very good ones, written by other authors: we shall find many such in the writings of Lamothe, whose productions in this style are so much decried; but by carefully selecting from the compositions of all our fabulists, we might form an excellent collection, far more moral than that of La Fontaine; and perhaps equal to his in point of literary merit; though not of that sort of merit which particularly characterizes La Fontaine; his charming natural vein, his piquant grace, his expressions which are always so original, and his *naïveté* so frequently allied with acuteness, and even depth. What an astonishing variety of tones and talents in his fables! What truth of dialogue! What piquant, ingenious, and just criticism in the fable of the

Oreilles du lièvre, in the *Mulet se vantant de sa généalogie*, in the *Lion et le Tableau*, in the *Loup et la Cicogne*, and an infinite number of others! What ingenuity and grace in *la Bique et le Biquet*, *le Loup et l'Agneau*,* etc. etc.! What sentiment in *Baucis et Philémon*, in *le Vieillard qui plante*, etc. etc. What beautiful poetry! what cleverness and dignity in the fable of *les Animaux malades de la peste!* in *le Chêne et le Roseau;* and what a style for narrative and description! Did M. de Voltaire not blush to have said that the only charm of La Fontaine lay in his natural vein of writing! †

In my opinion many other fabulists possess this *charm*. This merit, which is daily becoming more and more rare, is doubtless a great one, and no other merit can supply the want of it. But an

* I have already cited on the subject of this fable, in the course of these *Mémoirs*, the charming remark of a child of eight years old, my pupil, Alfred; the addition would make the fable at once touching and moral, if the verses at the beginning were suppressed: *La raison du plus fort*, &c.; and this I always do in reciting it to children.—*(Note by the Author.)*

† See his Notes at the conclusion of the *Siècle de Louis XIV*. (*Note by the Author.*)

author may be natural without being a superior writer in this style. M. de Florian has written very pretty fables; they are written in natural language, clever, and moral; the collection is very agreeable on the whole, but contains nothing very remarkable: the author writes as feebly in verse as in prose; his style is destitute of colouring, animation, and harmony; his narrative is sometimes diffuse and languid, and he often recites coldly what should be warmly painted. In short, La Fontaine was a poet, and poetry is rarely to be found in modern fables.

In general, it seems to me that, since the days of La Fontaine, we have not profited so much as might have been expected, from our extended acquaintance with natural history and botany. What a number of animals are now known: the jerboa, the sarigue, the pécari, &c. which, from the singularity of their conformation and their habits, would furnish excellent subjects for fables! and what a multitude of singular plants have been discovered in the present century!

The fables of La Fontaine are not in general

sufficiently moral to allow us to place them in the class of works useful in education; besides, subjects taken from the animal creation necessarily present revolting pictures to the mind, and should for that reason never be placed in the hands of very young persons. The wolf devouring the innocent lamb, the vulture pouncing upon the dove, the tyranny and the cruelty of the lion, the ferocity of the tiger,—all these descriptions present images at once atrocious and disgusting, which cannot appear true but to those who have had the misfortune to live long among men. Apologues, taken from the vegetable kingdom, furnish only subjects in which such pictures are not to be found: yet the flowers have distinctive characters, fixed by their properties, whether good or bad: the poet ought to study them, know them well, conform to these the plan of his fiction, and may then draw from these, contrasts as piquant, and results as moral and instructive, as from the instincts and the habits of animals. In this sort of composition, a rule, which can never be dispensed with, is to make the animal, the plant, or the

material being, which is personified, speak and act according to its nature. Even La Fontaine is not in this respect quite free from censure. His fable of the pot of iron and the pot of clay is in this sense a bad one, because iron and earthen pots neither travel nor walk *. In the *Poule de Caux* of M. de Florian, the hen quits Normandy to visit London, where an English cock thus addresses her:

> Ecoute, miss, tu vois en moi ton maître,
> Mais tu me plais: je suis sultan ici,
> Et je veux bien dans mon sérail *t'admettre:*
> Viens donc m'aimer, je te l'ordonne ainsi.

Even if *English lovers* expressed themselves in this way, a thing of which we may fairly doubt, without being an Anglomane, the declaration would not be the more true, for the cock is only haughty and brutal with his rivals. M. de Flo-

* La Fontaine, though he does not say so, took the chief idea in this fable from the Scriptures: but in these the idea is good, because the Bible does not represent the earthen and iron pots as travelling: but only says what is quite true, that if by chance the two pots struck against each other, that of clay would be infallibly broken.—(*Note by the Author.*)

rian's hen goes into Germany, and there fixes her choice on a cock, who, on the point of marrying her, says:

> Vous savez bien que, dans cette jonrnée,
> Il faut d'abord, pour articles premiers,
> Que vous puissiez fournir seize quartiers.
> —Seize quartiers? dit la poule étonnée.
> —Oui, c'est le taux; rien de fait sans ce point,
> —Expliquez-vous je ne vous entends point;
> Quartiers de quoi?—Mais vraiment de noblesse,
> Nous la cherchons bien plus que la tendresse
> Dans nos hymens, etç.

The hen, who is *roturière*, and who never thinks of proposing to the cock to marry her with the left claw, quits Germany and goes into Spain: a Spanish cock becomes enamoured of her, and declares his passion: the hen is melting at his suit, when they see passing *une pie à l'œil hagard:* on which the cock exclaims that he is ruined, for that the magpie would denounce them to the Inquisition, and that they will both be burnt on his false report.

It is needless to insist upon the absurdity of this fable, in which the actors not only do not speak the language which belongs to their nature, but constantly say things the most opposite to their

habits, their manner of living, and their instinct. A fable or a tale is only an allegory, which ought to contain, besides its obvious sense, an ingenious allusion: but the allusion is good only when it results naturally from the subject, and accords perfectly with its proper sense. I repeat, that the fabulist must not suppose for the beings whom he represents as speaking, any discourses which they might not reasonably hold, if they possessed the gifts of language and moralizing. It would not be more extravagant and puerile, to represent in a story, a woman with wings, laying and hatching eggs, and possessing all the habits of a fowl, than to represent a cock as afraid of the Inquisition, or exacting from a hen the proofs of nobility, which are requisite to give admission into one of the chapters of Germany. As Boileau has well said, reason and truth ought to be found even in fables, and make their powerful ornament.

The plants have several distinctive characters, besides those which result from their properties. Their *kind* of utility or beauty, their aspect, their appearance, the spots which they seem best to love, the fictions about them which poetry has

consecrated, the virtues of which they are the symbols—have all joined in leading us to attribute to them a multitude of emblematic qualities, of which we may not despoil them. For example, it would be absurd to represent as speaking with arrogance such a flower as the *humble violet*, or to give a character of effrontery or boldness to the shrinking and chaste sensitive. The majestic cedar should not speak in the language of the most simple and rural nut-tree, &c.*

The Duc de Nivernois has presented the public with several agreeable fables, though the style is always extremely prosaic. The Abbé Aubert, and the Abbé Lemonnier have also written some pretty fables.

I am aware of the mediocrity of the fable which I am about to give: and I only insert it in this place by way of variety, and because, having only appeared in a newspaper, it has never been printed in my collected works.

* The latter paragraph is taken from the dedication to my *He bier moral*, a collection of fables taken from the vegetable kingdom.—(*Note by the Author.*)

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LE GLACON ET LE CRISTAL DE ROCHE.

FABLE.

Fier de son vain éclat et de sa transparence,
Durant un hiver rigoureux,
Un Glaçon, suspendu sur une roche immense,
Avec orgueil et complaisance
Osoit se comparer au Cristal précieux
Que le roc enfermoit dans ces flancs caverneux,
—Phénomène de la nature,
Que je suis, disoit-il, brillant radieux ! ....
Le Cristal, il est vrai, peut servir de parure;
Et décorer les palais somptueux,
Mais il doit tout à l'art, et sans la main habile
Qui le façonne, le mutile,
Pour dérober à tous les yeux
Ce qu'il a de défectueux,
Que seroit-il ? une pierre inutile
Qui n'auroit rien de merveilleux.
Et moi, sans secours de l'humaine industrie,
Quand la campagne est stérile et flétrie,
Je brille sur les champs. sur les monts orageux.
Sur le ruisseau de la prairie
—Quoi! dit à son tour le Cristal,
Fragile et froid Glaçon, tu pousses la sottise
Jusqu'à te croire mon rival!

Nul ne t'a façonné. Mais que pourroit-on faire
D'un si mince sujet? la main la plus légère
Voudroit vainement te polir;
Elle ne pourroit obtenir
Qu'un travail ridicule, enfin. . . que de l'eau claire.
Abjure donc l'erreur grossière
D'une stupide vanité,
Et reconnois la nullité
De ton existence éphémère.
Je le sais, tu peux éblouir;
Cesse de t'en enorgueillir,
Puisqu'un seul des rayons d'une vive lumière
Suffira pour t'anéantir.
Sous le voile léger de cette allégorie,
Qui ne reconnoîtroit les auteurs sans talens,
Vides de sens et pleins d'effronterie,
Toujours glacés et toujours arrogans,
Dévorés d'une basse envie,
Et qui, dans leur folle manie,
Courant après l'esprit, prennent les faux brillans
Pour les dons heureux du génie!
Mais le flambeau de la raison
Sait dissiper l'illusion.
De leur orgueilleuse chimère,
Et cette clarté salutaire,
Que nul d'eux ne peut soutenir,
Fait aussitôt évanouir
Leur célébrité passagère.

Another part of my subject remains. I have to speak of our *fugitive pieces* in verse: this

class comprehends all our little *pièces de société*, *impromptus*, *quatrains*, *etc.* M. de Voltaire has been quoted as the author of the most charming compositions in this style; but all impartial judges of literature will accord that distinction to Gresset.

M. de Voltaire has written no fugitive pieces to be compared to the epistle on *Convalescence*, to the *Chartreuse*, to *Vert-vert*, or even to several of the epistles of M. de Saint Lambert, or to those of several modern authors. The celebrated epistle on the *Tu*, and the *Vous*, by M. de Voltaire, besides being extremely licentious, is entirely destitute of interest and truth, and describes absolutely nothing; that of the *Mondain*, which is very immoral, is a genuine plagiarism, as I have shewn elsewhere; his *pièces de société* are very mediocre, and several of them are quite unworthy of a name so celebrated—for instance, the lines composed for Madame Dubocage, and those which he addressed to the King of Prussia, on receiving from the latter some purgative pills.

Songs and vaudevilles are no longer in fashion: for politics have deprived us of that frank and innocent gaiety, in which all their point lay, and which formed one of the most distinguishing attributes of the French character.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON ROMANCES.

FORMERLY we wrote only historical romances, and we are bound to accord a high esteem to works in that style, when we reflect that it was the reading of these chivalric stories, which exalted and developed the courage, and the heroic qualities of Alfred the Great, king of England. We know that this prince while a youth listened eagerly to the reading aloud of these works, which the queen, his mother, made her daily occupation, and amusement.

Richardson, Fielding, and Goldsmith, rendered the *domestic novel* popular, and it will be allowed that *Clarissa*, *Pamela*, *Grandison*, *Tom Jones*, and the *Vicar of Wakefield*, were well worthy of doing so. I believe I have succeeded in reviving among ourselves the *historical novel*, and in order

that the reader may not confound with historic incidents those traits which are merely the inventions of the author, I have followed the plan of placing at the bottom of the page, after every true detail, the historical quotation, which however, does not at all interrupt the reader; and to refer him to the end of the volume for instructive notes, but which were not sufficiently dramatic to be placed in the body of the work. This useful innovation was employed for the first time in the *Chevaliers du Cygne*, and has since been gradually adopted.

In our days the English novel writers have entered with brilliant success upon the vast career of historical romances; they owe this revolution in taste to Sir Walter Scott. I have hitherto only spoken superficially of this writer, whose name is so celebrated, because I could not procure his works in English at a moment when I could have found leisure to read them. I have consequently been obliged to content myself with hastily glancing over some fragments of translations, of which the style, I confess, offended

me: but since the English, who are such good judges, and our masters in this branch of literature, enthusiastically admire the productions of this writer, I must believe that they possess great merit: so high a reputation is well deserving of a mature examination, and this I propose to give them as soon as I can afford the time, which will certainly be within three or four months.

The innumerable quantity of novels with which every country of Europe is overrun, especially within the last fifty years, has of course done great harm to this *branch* of writing: because in the number there were so few good ones, and the mass only forms a collection of pitiful works which are either stupid or pernicious. There is nothing easier than to write a bad novel; and nothing which demands more reflection, more knowledge of the world, and of the human heart, and greater solidity of principle, than to write one in which every thing shall be true to nature, moral, consistent, and well written: and such a good novel should be. A *treatise* on a point of morals, or a sentiment, is always dull and dry.

The same ideas put into action will always be better developed and consequently more useful. The best written dissertation, or the best conceived discourse, will never paint virtue in all her charms: the most beautiful thought does not touch the heart, or melt us into tears, if it does not result from an interesting situation.

Rousseau says that *il faut des romans à une nation corrompue;* (a corrupt nation requires romances;) but what will the nation become if the novels corrupt them! . . . . . To all nations and in all times romances will be useful, if their authors know how to write, if they possess a warm imagination, good principles, and pure intentions.

The reading even of the best romances is always somewhat dangerous for women, while they are in early youth. This kind of reading should be reserved for the solace and amusement of their riper age—but I think it is profitable to young men, especially for those who are destined to live in the great world. A romantic turn of mind is, in the case of a young man, a preservative from an infinite number of dangers.

There exists a romance which enjoys a reputation that appears to me very unmerited, I mean, *Manon Lescaut*, by the Abbé Prévost. Like all the works of that author, it is written with great negligence, and the conception of the plot seems to me bad in all respects. It is surely a very ignoble project to excite our interest in favour of a rogue and a girl of the town, and to make such persons the *hero* and *heroine* of a romance. Besides, even as regards the management of the thing, the odious design is badly executed. The Chevalier des Grieux is represented by the author as a weak and easily-led character, with so little principle, that the reader foresees, from the first few pages, that he will yield without any resistance to seductions the most base and vile. Instead of this, he should have been painted as full of energy, and possessing strong sentiments of honour; and counting on his strength of mind, he should have been represented as thinking himself secure from any serious passion for an object so contemptible, and that becoming at last the victim of his presumption and violent passion for

Manon: he should find himself drawn, to his equal astonishment and horror, into the abyss where the author finally plunges him: in this case, we should have witnessed agonizing struggles of mind, touching situations, and a great moral lesson developed by the plot. Instead of this, the work is without animation: there is some nature in it, but no warmth of colouring, and vice is painted throughout with a cold and revolting kind of simplicity. Finally, the author's lack of talent is felt strongly at the *dénouement*, which, though extremely tragical, is not in the least touching. The best of the Abbé Prévost's romances is the *Doyen de Killerine:* there is both truth in the characters and interest in the situations.

The *contes moraux* or *nouvelles*, which are merely very short novels, require absolutely of their authors two qualities which constitute principally good writers—perfect clearness and precision without dryness. It is far more easy to write agreeable novels in two or three volumes, than to compose an interesting and moral novel: in the latter, every thing ought to hurry on the catastrophe, or

contribute to it: and it is for this reason that the moral is always far more striking, and consequently more efficacious in a tale than if it is framed on a larger scale. The same may be said of the description or the critique of any ridiculous points in a character. For this reason, authors write far more novels than tales, and the episodes in them are almost always their feeblest part: for example, those in *Don Quixote*, in *Gil Blas*, &c. &c. The story of *Clementina* in *Grandison* is not an episode: it forms one of the adventures of the hero of the romance.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON EPISTOLARY STYLE.

We owe to the age of Louis XIV. models of all kinds of writing, and of a fine epistolary style among the number. Without mentioning the Letters of Madame de Sévigné, those of Madame de Maintenon may be quoted as perfect in their way, and those of Madame de Coulanges and her husband, with several others that might be quoted, are charming. This kind of writing fell off greatly under the Regency, and in the early part of the reign of Louis XV. Among the gentlemen belonging to the court of that period, the only one who wrote letters worthy of being cited is the Chevalier de Boufflers; but in the present day there are many persons existing, and among these several women, who write letters with remarkable talent.

In general authors, even the most celebrated, are not those who write the best familiar letters: because their occupations do not admit of their taking the necessary pain, and also because they naturally reserve their best ideas for their works. The Letters of J. J. Rousseau, and of M. de Voltaire, in point of style and the thoughts they contain, are very middling, and almost all destitute of the charm of grace.

Some have said that an epistolary style should be made up of short sentences: but this as a general rule would be a very bad one. In this case, as in all the other kinds of writing, the style ought to be that which best suits the subject to be treated of. If a person wrote a letter of condolence on the subject of a death or any other distressing event in this short sententious style, it would have a moralizing air which would seem truly ridiculous. A letter, in which tender sentiments are to be expressed, should never be written in this manner, which is only fit for relating the news and anecdotes of the day with gaiety and lightness.

Before the revolution the *protocol* of letters was as follows :—

Men gave the title of *monseigneur* to the Marshals of France, and ended thus: *I am with respect*, &c.* Ladies wrote only, *Monsier le maréchal*, and never employed the word *respect* but when addressing those relatives to whom it was due, to the princes of the blood, old ladies, and to foreign princesses of royal descent. Both men and women, when addressing their equals, used the words: *J'ai l'honneur d'être votre*, &c.; to their inferiors, *je suis très-parfaitement votre*, &c.; for people were then polite to every one. Men were bound to put the word *respect* in all letters written to women. The princes of the blood themselves did not omit this sort of urbanity. We have substituted for all this the words, *les sentimens distingués, la haute considération, les civilités respectueuses*, &c. When persons know positively in what cases they are to apply these forms, it will be found that they are even better than the old ones, provided only that they preserve the word

* *Je suis avec respect* was more respectful than *profound respect*.—*(Note by the Author.)*

respect for the women. Old people still, from habit, preserve the *obéissance* of *serviteurs* and *servantes*. It must be allowed that this humility is rather strained: the exaggeration of forms in the old times was extreme. In the reign of Louis XIII. a letter writer generally concluded by saying that he was, *avec passion*. Balzac ends all his letters in this way. The truth is, that it is much better to be *impassioned* than *servile*; and it is certain that forms evidently exaggerated and false are bad: and we have never had any good ones.

CHAPTER XX.

ON JOURNALS AND JOURNALISTS.

DURING the last twenty-five years, the chief defect of our journalists, when they speak of new works (in the shape of reviews), is that they give no account of the books, for more than half of the articles is employed in making general dissertations or reflections. An author, when reviewed, may submit to the judgment of his critic, when he is clearly proved to have written ill; but how can this be when the reviewer rather speaks of any thing else than the book under review? The true talent of a journalist consists in giving a just and precise idea of the production about which he writes; this is what every reader looks for and desires; it is not a digression which the reader demands, but a good extract from the book under review; and he has only to do this in a very limited space. He ought, therefore, to get quickly

at the result; any preamble, however ingenious, is misplaced here, because it removes all probability of giving the necessary details on the book to be praised or condemned. If a writer has the talent of original composition, let him reserve his sententious prologues for treatises or morals; let him write books; but if he is to fill the situation of a critic upon literature, let him occupy himself only with the care of explaining to the reader, as clearly as he can, the plan; the object, the defects, and beauties of the performance announced. A journalist ought to point out boldly all the dangerous errors which exist in a work, at the same time that he spares their authors; he ought even to excuse them as much as possible, endeavouring to find out ingenious reasons which may tend to justify, not the work indeed, but the motives, intentions, and character of the writer. Respect for the person of an author cannot be carried too far. Unfortunately, writers in general, commit the error of so identifying themselves with their productions, that they complain when the latter are warmly attacked, of attacks upon their personal

character. This idea is improper, and is frequently caused by awkwardness on the part of the writer —for many authors are infinitely more estimable in their persons than in their works. A journalist, who is essentially moral, ought to judge with the utmost severity all works in which there is any thing contrary to morality. In a case like this, he may legitimately employ a piquant irony, or any means of turning into ridicule the corrupt principles which he has to combat. But this tone would be equally odious and misplaced in the criticism of works of which the morality is pure, and which, besides, are not contemptible in a literary point of view. Mockery, in such a case, would be only indicative of hatred, and the judge, justly suspected, would be condemned.

Up to this time, there have been but two classes of anonymous authors. Those of the one class conceal their names only through modesty, and attack no one; the others hide theirs in order to be able to attack, or be licentious, with impunity. The latter are so cowardly, that even if all their satires were well-founded (which never is the

case), they would not have the slightest influence on public opinion; and their authors, who are quite unworthy of being ranked among good critics, would only take their place among libellers. In the present day, there exists a third class of anonymous writers, namely the *journalists;* who not only do not sign their more offensive articles, but put false initials to them; they not only conceal themselves, but they wear a mask. What is their motive for this precaution? Is it in order to remain unknown? No—for at Paris, at least, the authors of the articles in question are generally known, and they never disavow them.

In the country, however, and in foreign countries, the reader does not possess the key to these mysterious letters; he often sees the whole alphabet arrayed against an unfortunate author without being acquainted with the real names of Messrs. A. B. C. and D. To what purpose are these disguises? What is the motive of them? But a still more extraordinary thing—the anonymous writer pretends that the disguise under which he shelters himself is so respectable, that

even the author abused and calumniated, has no right, and ought not, in his answers to his critic, to divulge the name of the latter. If he mention the journalist by his real name, the latter complains of it, as of a very improper proceeding. We ought only to respect the *anonyme* which is preserved through modesty; the satiric *anonyme* deserves no respect; when a person attacks, his name ought to be published. Brave men, when they wish to fight a duel, ought never to wear a veil, however transparent it may be, nor search out for a shady place in which to combat. If hiding oneself in the dark is a piece of cowardice, may we not say that in this case, withdrawing from the light of day is a want of courage, or at least a very ungallant timidity? Besides, as the criticised authors declare their names, should there not be equality both in the attack and defence? It is far more respectable, and people discuss matters with far more politeness, when, in place of a false initial letter, the writer signs his name at the foot of his articles. It must be allowed, that at the present moment, there are

among our journalists many more distinguished men of letters than in the best times of our literature; and this is an evil, because petty systems or petty hatreds prevent them from writing good books. They often write clever articles; and they scarcely ever compose useful ones; they might, by judging according to their abilities, contribute to elevate literature, and they hasten its downfal, by employing, in the strangest manner, outrageous praise, or the bitterest censures: these reproaches, however, though applicable in general, must be allowed to have exceptions, and no one makes them with more pleasure than I do. I shall close this article with an excellent sentence of M. de Voltaire, which he addresses to all journalists:

"When you judge, you should be thoroughly informed; when you criticise, you should be *scrupulously exact*."

CHAPTER XXI.

ON AUTHORS AND ON THE DECADENCE OF LITERATURE.

WANT of principles, which constantly produces, in some respects, the want of taste; falsehood, which always precedes a general depravation; the affectation which was gaining on all minds; politics, which have since occupied so fully all heads; such are the principal causes of the decadence of literature. Several years before the revolution, Marivaux, Thomas, Diderot, Raynal, d'Alembert, had contrived to ruin French prose, and we no longer took for models in the art of writing the great authors of that age: Massillon, Montesquieu, Buffon, (the most perfect of them all), J. J. Rousseau, and Voltaire.

A good style is not *mannered*, it is inimitable; but it is always easy to copy a style of which the *manner* is very strongly marked; for instance, of Marivaux, or d'Alembert (in his *Eloges*), and of

others who have been named; but this is only copying their defects, though both the imitators and many of their readers mistake this unfortunate resemblance for the talent which has seduced them into imitation. M. de Voltaire, who was such an excellent judge, (when he spoke his real opinion) in vain said; "What would it be but a work full of far-sought and problematical ideas; How greatly superior to all such brilliant thoughts are the simple and natural words;"—

"Cinna, tu t'en souviens et tu veux m'assassiner !"

The ambition to shine and to say in a new manner what others have said before, is the source of these novel expressions and far-fetched thoughts. When a writer cannot shine by his ideas, he wishes to shine by his words. . . . . If we continue thus, the language of Bossuet, Racine, Pascal, Corneille, Boileau, and Fénélon, will soon become superannuated. Why avoid an expression which is in use in order to introduce one which says precisely the same thing? A new word is only pardonable when it is absolutely necessary, intelli-

gible, and sonorous; we are obliged to create such in physics; but do we ever make any new discoveries in the human heart? Is there any other grandeur but that of Corneille and of Bossuet? Are there any other passions but those which have been wielded by Racine, or touched on by Quinault? Is there any other evangelical morality but that of Bourdaloue? &c."*

M. de Voltaire, who, when he wrote seriously, should have been constituted the oracle of Parnassus, vainly all his life maintained that literary doctrine. His most passionate admirers, however, far from profiting by his sage lessons, adopted principles altogether opposed to them. There was a curse upon the pen which had been so frequently dipped in filth. The impiety of M. de Voltaire made disciples without number—his own good taste gained him none. That man born to illustrate his age, and who was its destroyer, alternately so brilliant and so contemptible, so noble and so base; that extraordinary man has left behind him many excellent precepts relative to lite-

* *Dictionnaire philosophique*, at the word Esprit.

rature. I advise all the youthful lovers of literature to look for them, not in that infamous and disgusting edition, in which his finest works are buried among filth, but in his select works. I hope that all young men who are desirous of entering upon a literary career, will allow me to give them a few counsels, and to offer some reflections, the fruits of a long experience. A writer should never send his work to the printer, until he has acquired nearly all the accomplishments he is ever to possess, and especially until his style is formed. To present the public with works written in the taste of a schoolboy, is in some measure to insult it, except in the case of the exact sciences; for the solution of a problem, or a discovery, are positive things, and age has nothing to do with them; but in the case of works of imagination, it is in general impossible to write and compose as well at nineteen or twenty as at twenty-four or twenty-five. Four or five years of additional reading and study make an infinite difference at an age when a man has all his activity of mind about him, and the enthusiasm for literature, which nothing has yet chilled.

Every author who cannot be cited as a good writer, must be always ranked in the class of middling authors. But in literature, there are such honourable degrees in that class! who would not be contented with the success which Lamothe obtained, and the reputation which his works have preserved? The first place in literature can never be attained without great purity of moral principle. We excuse the aberrations of men of genius; but we do not tolerate it (at least at a certain age) in men who have not the excuse of a brilliant imagination for their errors; a cold fancy and a mind unsusceptible of exaltation, render perseverance in study far more easy; we then acquire by means of labour and meditation, a sort of merit which great authors have very easily possessed. We may hope to write works eminently useful, and consequently durable, by means of talent, good sense, consistency, and felicitous combinations.

No writer will ever be placed on the first rank of great men, unless his principles are as pure as his talents are elevated.

Corneille, Racine, Pascal, Bossuet, Fénélon, and Boileau for this very reason will be always superior to the writers of the last century, even if they did not also possess over them a superiority in point of genius; if sound morality is so necessary to eminent talent, what ought it to be to minds of an inferior order.

Works which make us esteem their authors, and bless their labours, are titles of glory with which all lofty and generous minds may be content; writers do not obtain admiration, but at the expense of exciting senseless hatreds, which are but too often implacable; a light which is too strong always offends the eye; benefits which have nothing brilliant about them create few ingrates; works which are at once useful and mediocre, are universally applauded; for in such a case gratitude costs nothing. Besides, estimable talents, but talents that have no eclat, do not wear out life; it is not a labour fixed, regulated, followed, and persevered in with calmness, which exhausts their strength; it is a multitude of ideas and great ardour of the imagination which fatigue us.

An impetuous torrent bounding from the summit of a mountain, falls in thunder, swells rapidly, and hurries along with it every thing which it meets in its track; but soon it dries up and stops, because it precipitates and overflows itself; whereas the peaceful rivulet running noiselessly over a gentle and easy slope, yearly waters the same pastures, and every spring makes the same flowers grow. The lamp which contains but a single and feeble match,' will last longer than that which throws out a broader light. Lastly, an author of the second order, who is possessed of mildness and caution, may go on without encountering any storms to the end of his career, in ordinary times; that is to say, when no spirit of party is dividing society; his principles will never force him to engage in interminable disputes, because pernicious works have no partisans; he will be secure from envenomed jealousies; he will not have to rebut the attacks of calumny; he will not even encounter any instances of injustice. If he is deprived of the glittering honours which the public alone can bestow, he will at least obtain

without difficulty all the decorations of glory; literary honours will be accorded to him, while the man of genius, if he is without fortune and without distinction, struggling unceasingly against a multitude of savage enemies, will only gather, as the fruit of all his labours, a renown of which envy cannot deprive him; but accompanied by revolting, and unanswerable, and unjust attacks, libels of all kinds, and health destroyed. Where shall he look for a balance against this? . . . . . In his conscience. But where shall he find an asylum against the storm? . . . . . In the tomb. There is always, against a man of genius, a conspiracy either secret or declared; his condition is to be compared to a state of continual warfare. The cultivation of literature, which has been greatly restrained in point of study within the last twenty-five years, is infinitely extended by the multitude of writers, who succeed each other with such rapidity, and augment prodigiously the number of enemies which celebrated authors have to dread. Formerly men of letters found in the court and society impartial judges. Now they

find only rivals; for almost all people of any rank are authors. I should say to the young author who makes his first appearance before the public; as long as your works only are attacked, never reply, at least unless you are falsely and unfairly quoted; but no author ought to pass over in silence a personal insult, written in a public journal, which is sanctioned by the government. It is unworthy of a man of honour to make reprisals, and to reply by personalities; but in such a case, attack the writings of your enemies, for subjects of criticism are never wanting; do this with equal justice, fairness, and severity, and continue to do so as long as they persist in insulting you. When they stop, you will do so also; and if they offer you any satisfaction, receive it. The muses have no rancour; he who loves them has no gall about him. You will then have acted, not through a spirit of vengeance, but for the honour of literature, and the interest of literary men. Endeavour moreover to generalize your critiques, so as to render them useful on some points, either by new reflections, or recalling the first principles. Never

make advances to your enemies; they would mistake generosity for terror, but do not reject those which may be made to you; provoke no one; forget, with grace and good faith, satires and injuries; love peace, which is so necessary in literary studies; let your reconciliations be always frank and unreserved; but when it is necessary, be ready to combat with firmness, vigour, and perseverance. By following this honourable route, and especially by preserving to the end a pure and courageous pen, you will reach the goal accompanied by the esteem of the public, and (which is still better) with a satisfied conscience and in the possession of happiness and peace. Towards the end of the stormy career, the past, to a laborious man of letters, exists only in his productions: almost all the rest is effaced from his memory along with those passions which time has annihilated: the life of his mind is eternity in his writings—for it is in them that he has deposited his opinions, his judgments, his sentiments, and his soul: he will not leave behind him merely his mortal dust: he has confided to the world, which

he is about to quit, a portion of his immortality. Happy will it be for him if, in perusing his numerous writings, he can find in them always a sound and uniform morality, and generous thoughts!

Nevertheless, in spite of the decay which for the last thirty-five years has grieved all real friends to literature, we may, at the present period, venture to conceive hopes for the future; seeing that they are founded upon several fine works which have appeared together, or successively, in these latter times.

CHAPTER XXII.

ON THE FRENCH LANGUAGE.

THERE has been a long and continued complaint of the pretended *poverty* of the French tongue: yet since it has been fixed by the chefs d'œuvre of all our classical authors, it is, I venture to say, the most beautiful of all living languages: one of the things which proves this is, that it is the most universally spread throughout Europe, and even in some other parts of the world. Voltaire was the first, I believe, who remarked that the distinguishing character of the French language was its clearness: and he thinks justly, that this remark comprises in itself a high eulogy. A celebrated critic of antiquity (Quinctilian) admits, as an incontestable principle, that the first quality of an orator is *clearness*.

In fact, it is impossible to write well without precision, and an author is always diffuse when he

is obscure, unless he makes himself altogether unintelligible.

We complain of not having in our tongue enough of synonymes: the English have infinitely more of these than we have. What is the consequence of this! a great quantity of verbiage and repetition, particularly in descriptive and pastoral poetry. For example, an excellent English work (Thomson's *Seasons*) is frequently insupportable from this cause. In an infinite number of passages the lines are overcharged with epithets and repetitions, which it was impossible for the author to perceive, because he has employed in them all the synonymes which he could gather together: that is to say, words always different to describe the same object, or to express the same thought—a thing which is totally destructive of clearness: for in the midst of this superflux of words, the reader, besides the ennui which he often experiences, very easily loses the thread of the author's ideas. Lastly, a multiplicity of synonymes takes away from a great writer the merit of finding happy terms of expression in order to supply their place.

We are reproached with our *e* mute; but this is only to good writers, both in verse and in prose, a very small difficulty, easily vanquished. Our *e* mute produces many elisions full of harmony and sweetness: besides, by means of the orthography they point out the genders, which is useful in many respects, and greatly contributes to clearness of style.

The French language is accused of several *bizarreries*, which are quite inexplicable: these are now become positive rules, which no one can infringe; we are asked why we banish from elevated poetry the words *pois*, *citron*, &c. and why we nevertheless admit into it the disgusting ones of *boue*, *fange*, and *fumier*. We have preserved the latter in order to cast dishonour, by the use of them, on whatever is base and vile: which is assuredly a moral idea, and we have proscribed *citron*, *pois*, &c. &c. with good reason, because they retrace to our minds ideas of cookery; which to the disgrace of gluttony are always most ignoble. The word *ragoût* is of this description, while that of *pain* is not so, for bread merely sa-

tisfies hunger, and is not a refinement upon a low and *material* vice.*

On the same principles the French language is the most chaste of all tougnes—a thing which is most generally allowed. It may be said with truth, that the more our language is studied, the more cause we shall have to admire the judgment, delicacy, and good taste of those who formed and fixed it.

* I might here multiply examples, and show by citations the good sense and delicacy of our language: but I have no intention here of writing *poetics:* I only wished to trace a sketch, and to combat certain common places, which appeared to me both false and dangerous.—(*Note by the Author.*)

CHAPTER XXIII.

ON READING IN PUBLIC.

In the French Society, previous to the revolution, the reading of manuscript works was much more frequent than in the present day; and for this, one reason is, that far féwer works are written, though people write a great deal more. But in former times authors wrote for the library: they put their spirit into *volumes:* now they put it into mere *flying leaves.* Posterity will not remember one of them, but this is a matter of perfect indifference to the authors; for in general they write only for the day—or for a particular *town*—and often for a particular *faubourg.*

Even if men of letters wrote good literary works, the reading of them would cause much confusion in a numerous assembly: people would be looking out for *allusions* only: some hearers would not fail to find plenty of offensive ones, and we should

witness what was never seen before, an author hissed in a drawing room.

It was formerly thought, that in order to read well in a drawing room, it was not necessary to declaim with as much violence as on the stage, and that it was quite requisite to avoid gesticulation: Messieurs de La Harpe and M. Lemière were considered very absurd as readers, because they read as the actors did at the theatre. At present, authors, when they read their productions in public, endeavour to imitate in a servile manner the actors who are most in fashion; and the latter have multiplied their gestures and carried theatrical emphasis far beyond its former bounds.

At the country residences of the princes formerly, and even among almost all our private gentlemen, the company assembled after dinner to hear something read before the time of walking. The pieces read commonly consisted of our best works, plays, voyages, or history: but this taste has passed away along with that of literature.

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ANALYTICAL

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OF THE

MEMOIRS OF THE COUNTESS DE GENLIS.

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END OF THE EIGHTH AND LAST VOL.

LONDON:
IBOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARAS